CHINA QUAKE
A powerful earthquake with a magnitude of 7.8 struck China's Sichuan province on Monday

METRO / A23
Businessman shot dead in holdup; 2 responding Manila cops also killed

BUSINESS / B1
1-year T-bill yield rises to 5.993%

NEWS / A2
MILF welcomes Libyan peace monitors

SPORTS / A29
Jazz, Spurs level NBA semis with Lakers, Hornets

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, May 13, 2008 ★★ 6 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 155 P10 www.inquirer.net

P15-M hi-tech House voting system fails test

By Norman Bordadora

FOUR MONTHS AFTER it was installed, the P15-million electronic attendance and voting system of the House of

SEE PAGE A23

Earthquake kills thousands in China

CHONGQING, CHINA—A MASSIVE earthquake struck central China on Monday, killing thousands of people in one county alone, flattening schools and homes, and trapping nearly 900 students under the rubble—a powerful jolt that was felt across a swathe of Southeast Asia.

The official Xinhua News Agency said 80 percent of the buildings had collapsed in Beichuan county and that another 30,000 people were believed hurt there, raising fears the overall death toll could increase sharply.

The epicenter of the 7.8-magnitude earthquake was in Sichuan, striking 92 kilometers northwest of the provincial capital of Chengdu. It hit in the middle of the afternoon—when classes and offices were full.

The initial death toll in Sichuan was 7,651, including up to 5,000 in the county alone, Xinhua said.

Thousands of soldiers and police have been dispatched to the epicenter in Wenchuan county, about 100 km from Beichuan, which has a population of 160,000.

In another area close to the epicenter, workers were struggling to dig out an estimated 900 students trapped when the Juyuan Middle School building collapsed. Photographs showed heavy cranes trying to move rubble from the ruined structure.

Xinhua said that rescuers had recovered at least 50 bodies from the debris of the school building. It did not say if any students had been pulled out alive.

Xinhua said an unknown number of students were also reported buried after buildings collapsed at five other schools in Deyang city in Sichuan.

The earthquake comes fewer than three months before the start of the Beijing Summer Olympics, which China hopes to use to showcase its rise in the world.

An Olympic spokesperson

EARTHQUAKE A11

THIS video grab from China's CCTV shows an injured person being brought in for treatment following a strong earthquake Monday.

Meralco questioned on pass-on charges

Systems losses, sweetheart deals hit

By Gil C. Cabunegan Jr., Doris Z. Pazzibugan and Ronnel W. Domingo

SENATORS GANGED up on Manila Electric Co. for passing on to consumers "systems losses" and its GMA electricity bills worth almost P500 million annually and questioned "sweetheart" deals with Lopez-owned companies and excessive salaries for its executives.

For almost eight hours during the Joint Congressional Power Commission (Powercom) hearing televised nationwide, officials of Meralco sought to justify power rates described as the second highest in Asia next to Japan's.

Meralco president Jesus Francisco said that the power distributor was heavily regulated by the government and that it was doing everything to "optimize the overall cost of generation and transmission for our consumers."

MERALCO A11

FACE OFF Joint Congressional Power Commission Chair Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago (second from left) with (from left) Powercom cochair Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo and Sens. Joker Arroyo question for almost eight hours Meralco president Jesus Francisco, ERC Chair Winston Garcia and Energy Regulatory Commissioner Alejandro Barin.

ROSS PANALIGAN

Where in the world is ERC Chair Albano?

By Doris Pazzibugan

GIVEN THE HIGHEST CHARGED topic, the absence or lack of participation of key personalities in the power sector stood out during yesterday's congressional oversight hearing on the country's high power rates.

Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) Chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. sent one of his commissioners to the hearing of the Joint Congressional Power Commission because he was on "vacation."

"He's on vacation leave for three weeks until May 17," ERC Commissioner Alejandro Barin explained in an interview after the eight-hour hearing.

Barin said President Macapagal-Arroyo had agreed to Albano's vacation despite the raging word war between the government and Manila Electric Co. The ERC holds the power to decide on Meralco's petition for power rate increases.

Barin, however, denied rumors that circulated last week that the 74-year-old Albano, a former Isabela representative, was on a "Mediterranean cruise" with Meralco's Manolo

WHERE A11

Transport strike sizzles in provinces but fizzles out in Metro Manila

By Riza T. Olchondra, Metro staff and Inquirer Bureaus

STRIKING JEEPNEY DRIVERS from the militant Piston group yesterday crippled public transportation in some cities in Southern Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao but made little dent in Metro Manila, where officials said fewer than 10 percent of drivers took part.

Police said they detained 12 drivers for scattering spikes on the national highway in San Pedro, Laguna, and for harassing those who refused to join. A similar spike-throwing incident occurred on Edsa near the Mauserito area and "isolated cases" of harassment were reported in Navotas, police said.

The Pinaglabanan Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (Piston) rallied the strike to demand the scrapping of the expanded value-added tax (E-Vat) on oil products and of the oil deregulation law.

But other major jeepney groups, as well as drivers of buses and taxis, did not join.

The Piston strike came amid skyrocketing prices of basic commodities and surging prices of oil in the world market, where the price of a barrel shot past the $126 mark last week.

Piston's strike call apparently found greater sympathy in the provinces, where up to 90 to 95 percent of public transportation

TRANSPORT A6

US airlifts aid to Rangoon; UN pleads with junta

RANGOON, BURMA—THE United States delivered its first relief supplies to Burma (Myanmar) on Monday as the United Nations urged the country's military rulers to cooperate with international donors in helping up to 2 million cyclone victims facing disease and starvation.

The unarmed military C-130 cargo plane, packed with supplies, flew out of the Thai Air Force base of Utapao and landed in Rangoon (Yangon), capping prolonged negotiations to persuade Burma's junta to accept US help.

An official welcome party greeted the plane, including a group of Cabinet ministers, military officers and the top US diplomat in Burma, Shari Villarosa. Afterward, the supplies were transferred to Rainbow

US AIRLIFTS A11

Critics say Burma crisis shames Asean

RANGOON—THE ASSOCIATION of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) has again been shamed by its failure to bring member state Burma (Myanmar) into line, this time over demands that it open its doors to a full-scale cyclone relief effort, according to critics.

The aid crisis, which has put in danger the lives of 1.5 million desperate survivors of the disaster, makes a mockery of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' efforts to exert more influence on members, the critics said.

"This reflects dismally on all Asean leaders and governments. They can definitely do

BURMA A11

GMA pardons 9 Magdalo rebels as gift to Esperon

By Christine O. Avendaño and Nikko Dizon

AS A PARTING GIFT FOR HIS favorite general, President Macapagal-Arroyo pardoned nine junior military officers who took part in the short-lived 2003 Oakwood mutiny as recommended by newly retired Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon.

The President made the announcement during the formal turnover of the AFP Command in Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City yesterday. She profusely thanked Esperon for a "job so perfectly done" during his 22-month stint that included foiling destabilization attempts against her rule.

"You have shown no man is above the law even as you support and you have even respect-

GMA PARDONS A20

PRESIDENT Arroyo watches outgoing AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. turn over command to Gen. Alexander Yano (right).

Son of Mindanao told: Bring peace to your land

By Christine O. Avendaño

A SON OF MINDANAO YESTERday assumed the post of Armed Forces chief of staff—and immediately received his marching orders from President Macapagal-Arroyo: Bring peace to your own land.

Speaking at the turnover of the AFP Command, Ms Arroyo said that Gen. Alexander Yano was the first AFP chief of staff and the first Army chief to come from that volatile southern region.

Yano hails from Zamboanga del Norte. He takes over from now retired Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr.

"We count on you, therefore, to help bring lasting peace to your native island of Mindanao," Ms Arroyo said.

No sooner had Esperon le-

SON OF MINDANAO A20

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Cloudy with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms in Metro Manila, Central Luzon, Calabarzon and Mimaropa; partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers in the rest of the country

Manila	Partly cloudy	Baguio	Cloudy with rain
Tuguegarao	Partly cloudy	Tagbilaran	Cloudy with rain
Legazpi	Partly cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with rain
Catarman	Cloudy with rain	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with rain
Iloilo	Cloudy with rain	Cotabato	Cloudy with rain
Kalibo	Cloudy with rain	Puerto Princesa	Cloudy with rain
Cebu	Cloudy with rain	Davao	Cloudy with rain

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MILF welcomes Libyan monitors

Plea from GMA heeded through foundation headed by Gaddafi's son

COTABATO CITY—THE REBEL MORO ISLAMIC Liberation Front (MILF) yesterday welcomed Libya's intention to take the place of Malaysia as lead peacekeepers in southern Philippines.

"Any move from any foreign government to meet militants if this would benefit the Bangsamoro people," Chairman Ameril Ali, MILF vice chair for political affairs, told the Inquirer. He said the matter should be discussed and agreed upon by both the government and the MILF.

President Macapagal-Arroyo asked Libya to step in as Malaysia began a phased withdrawal of its 41 soldiers and policemen from Mindanao amid an impasse in peace negotiations with the Muslim separatist group.

Ready to assume role

Dr. Salem Adam, special envoy to Mindanao of the Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation, said that Libya, through the foundation, was ready to assume the role played by Malaysia before it decided to pull out of the International Monitoring Team (IMT), a peacekeeping force formed in 2003 by the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The Gaddafi foundation, headed by Saiful Gaddafi, son of Libyan President Moammar Gaddafi, is Libya's prime aid development arm to Muslim-dominated communities in Mindanao.

Jesus Dureza, presidential adviser on the peace process, said Libya, which already has six monitors on Mindanao, had agreed to send 25 people to fill the void left by the Malaysians.

"I received an overseas call from Secretary Rex Gaszador who is in Tripoli that the Libyan government will send an initial contingent of four monitors," Dureza said in a text message. This would include Libya in 10 the number of Libyans in the IMT in Davao City.

"We welcome this good news. We thank this gesture of both in our peace process and we continue to hope for Libya's sustained and deepening participation in the IMT," he said.

Spokesperson for the Libyan Embassy could not be reached for comment.

The Malaysian-brokered political settlement with the MILF bogged down in December over the rebel group's demand for Bangsamoro territory. The government said this could not sign a document creating a Bangsamoro Juridical Entity because it would violate the Constitution.

The proposed BJE cover provinces and cities within the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Kuala Lumpur said last week it would not exercise with its unlimited deployment in the monitoring team without any apparent progress in the peace talks, sparking fears of renewed civil war.

Menace of war

Muslim guerrillas, in a statement on their web site, said Sunday they were ready for war. They accused the Arroyo administration of "deliberately retracting it was after it consistently refused to honor and abide by the 99 consensus points" on the issue of ancestral domain.

"War is a menace to everyone, but ... these talks must point to pursuit must prepare for war," said Mohammad Ameen, who heads a rebel secretariat.

Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, underscored this position. "We are still committed to the peaceful resolution of the problem. We are tired of war and we have been enjoying peace for the past few years, but if we are provoked, that's another story," he told the Inquirer.

Contingency plans set

On the other hand, Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. said yesterday the Armed Forces of the Philippines had its own contingency plans should offensive break out in Mindanao with the pullout of the Malaysian peace monitors.

"There are contingency preparations and our commanders are the ones in charge ... I will not talk about it," Teodoro told reporters at Camp Aguinaldo.

"But I'm hopeful that this saber-rattling will not lead to anything violent," he added.

"To me, the most important thing is for the hotheads to get out of the picture," Teodoro said. He said there should just be a review of the two panels' respective positions, which could result in mutually enforceable solutions rather than a return to the battlefield.

Doomsday scenario

Teodoro said that pursuing Malaysia's pullout from the IMT as a "doomsday scenario is very unfeasible and it will not push the peace process along in any reasonable way."

Meanwhile, government negotiator Rodolfo Garcia said the government would not abandon the peace talks.

He said it was reviewing the points of consensus accomplished during the peace talks.

"We're looking at the Constitution not as a limitation but as a guide and a yardstick," Garcia told The Associated Press, appealing to the rebels for patience. *Edwin O. Fernandez and Jonathan Manon, Inquirer Mindanao; Christine O. Avendaño, Nikko Dizon and wire reports*

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ **WORLD BANK** gives RP $1.3M to improve state agencies /A5

■ **DPWH: HEAVY** trucks to blame for damaged roads /A10

■ **'CLIMATE** change making climbing harder' /A11

6 OUT OF 10

PEOPLE, HOMES, OFFICES, BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS ARE COMFORTABLY COOLED BY A CARRIER.

Survey: 1/2 of Pinoy families say they're poor

HALF OF ALL FILIPINO families consider themselves "poor" and living standards today are a throw-back to 20 years ago, a Social Weather Stations survey for the first quarter of 2008 showed.

The latest survey, conducted March 26-31, showed the number of families who rated themselves poor rose three percentage points to the last quarter of 2007 to 50 percent [about nine million families.]

In order to cope, the survey indicated that poor families had been resorting their living standards.

The Self-Rated Poverty Threshold, or the monthly budget that poor households need in order not to consider themselves poor, has been sluggish for several years despite considerable inflation, the SWS said. This indicated "belt-tightening."

Belt-tightening is approximately since session in Alberto Morales in the National Capital Region (NCR) where the poverty threshold remained at P13,000 even though it had already gone up as high as P13,000 several times in the past.

Based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in base year 2000, today's threshold would be equivalent to P19,4,980, SWS estimates the difference of P4,980 per month to purchasing power is the source of the belt-tightening that took place.

"The deflated poverty threshold for NCR of below P7,800 per month is a throwback to living standards of 20 years ago," the SWS said.

In the Visayas, the deflated poverty threshold was calculated in P8,000—an amount already surpassed in 1998.

Six poor households in Mindanao, the self-rated poverty threshold even went down from P6,000 to P6,000. It had already been at P10,000 in December 1990.

Meanwhile, net satisfaction with the Arroyo administration has been dropping.

The survey showed that net satisfaction with the administration's efforts to help the poor was at a natural +7 [45 percent of adult respondents satisfied and 38 percent dissatisfied].

Net satisfaction with the administration on the issue went to the double-digit positive range of +28 to +25 between November 2006 and September 2007.

The SWS survey involved interviews with 1,200 household heads all over the country. The nonresponsement survey's sampling error margin was plus-or-minus three percentage points. *Cyrill Almendrala, Inquirer Research*

Church: Food crisis to last 5 yrs

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE country expects the crisis in high food prices to last up to five years, a church official said Monday.

"We're looking at this crisis to last three to five years," said Fr. Anton Pascual, head of the Manila archdiocese's charitable arm, Caritas Manila.

Pascual said Caritas had an arrangement with the government's rice-buying arm, the National Food Authority to distribute near-subsidized rice to the capital's poor neighborhoods.

The Philippines is one of the world's largest importers of the staple grain. The government has been scrambling to fill an expected 2008 production shortfall of 2.7 million tons amid rocketing grain prices worldwide.

Pascual said Caritas was also in talks with private firms for retail partnerships in which consumer goods would be offered to the poor through their social sectors arm "Bigasan ng Bayanan" at deep discounts.

The firms include San Miguel Corp., Universal Asia's biggest food and beverage group, and Caritas had a standing arrangement with the local unit of Dutch-based consumer giant Unilever, he added.

"We want them [local manufacturers] to make Caritas their dealer. We want to sell them items at 10-30 percent lower than the market prices," Pascual told reporters.

"We will take [goods with] deliverer packaging like soap. What is important for us is the content," he said.

Pascual said the Church was concerned about poor families bearing the brunt of rising inflation. A third of the Philippine population of 86 million live on a dollar a day or less, according to the latest government census.

Speaking to reporters yesterday at Villa San Miguel in Mandaluyong City, Pascual also offered hope that the the Caritas Manna Food Distribution Program beneficiary cards distributed by Caritas could be linked or duplicated.

He said Caritas family beneficiaries carried the pictures of the beneficiaries and family members and the social services workers personally knew them. Caritas was also coordinating with the Department of Social Welfare and Development to avoid such occurrences, he said.

"Apart from rice, we have also started to distribute other basic goods to our beneficiaries. They will soon be sold in packages to our family booklet holders," Pascual said.

Caritas is negotiating to sell cooking oil, fish sauce, soy sauce, noodles, soap and other basic commodities.

It has started distributing packaged basic goods, apart from selling 15 kilos of rice weekly at the Adamson Church, he said.

"We want to make consumer goods available on the ultra and moderate poor and be accessible for residents of those goods," Pascual said.

The ultra poor are families of six or less who earn less than P300 a day while the moderate poor are those who earn less than P500 a day. *AFP/ Jeannette I. Andrade*

Lawmakers pass tax exemption bill

By TJ Burgonio

AMIDST FOR THEIR ABSTENTION, congressmen yesterday stonewalled up in full force to approve a measure seeking to increase the personal exemptions of taxpayers.

Following a week-long delay, members of the House of Representatives voted to approve on second reading House Bill No. 3697, which provides tax relief amid rising prices of food, fuel and basic commodities.

Then working "overtime," the lawmakers voted 192 to 3 to pass the measure on third reading late last night.

The bill seeks to grant a single individual, a legally separated individual with no qualified dependents, a head of family and each married individual a personal exemption of P50,000.

The exemption is now P20,000. Under the P50,000-exemption allowed for single and married individuals under current tax brings, double the P25,000-exemption for head of family and much higher than the P32,000-exemption for each married individual.

The bill also seeks to raise the exemptions of male of four dependents to P20,000, from the current P8,000.

In effect, it seeks to grant a head of family and his spouse (if both are working), with four dependents, a total exemption of P200,000, the lawmakers said.

The approved on second reading came after Batangas Rep. Ezequiel Ansay, main author of the bill and chair of the committee on ways and means, adjusted all but one of proposed individual amendments.

Ansay and most of the colleagues only accepted Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman's proposed amendment which provides that a fourth child born after Dec. 31, 2010, and a third child born after Dec. 31, 2012, shall not be claimed as dependents.

Lagman is an advocate of population control.

The bill was up for approval on second reading Monday last week but lawmakers failed to finish the debates past the period of amendments and put it on hold due to lack of a quorum.

Encouraged, Camiguin Rep. Pedro Romualdo last week proposed a lock-down after the roll call to undermine the quorum and ensure the passage of key legislations. This was rejected.

House Bill No. 3973 is a consolidation of 20 related measures, among them removal certain provisions of Republic Act No. 8424, or the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997.

The amendments "should provide financial relief to taxpayers" amid a global food price increase, fuel and power and spiraling crude oil prices, Appropriations Prospero Nograles had said.

Earlier in the day, Malaysian party-list Rep. Elias Bulwarkus and Javier's committee ended lawmakers face believing the panel approved a bill granting P150,000 in tax exemptions to individual taxpayers.

Bulwarkus said the committee indicated during the April 22 hearing that it had adopted a version of Senate Bill 3071 which proposed the P150,000-exemption.

But the committee report later showed that the committee adopted the Department of Finance proposal granting only the same amount of exemption to each family, she said. "We were misled," she huffed.

Javier denied the accusation. "There was nothing deceptive in what I said. We just acted out of a misperception."

He also rejected Bulwarkus' proposal that a P150,000-exemption be granted per individual taxpayer, saying this would lead to a "revenue deficit."

'Wowowee' cast not aware of party, says network

By Marinel R. Cruz
Entertainment

WOWOWEE HOST GARY ARCELLE yesterday came to the defense of "Wowowee" cast members who reportedly snubbed over 200 fans waiting for them at a private party in Honolulu, saying they had not promised to attend any event other than the one at Aloha Stadium.

"Pamasaan," the network's top-rating daily noontime variety show staged a two-hour special in the 50,000-seat stadium, the largest in Hawaii, on May 11 (May 12 in Manila). Stations of the show will be aired soon beginning on GMA-7/Channel 2 and on The Filipino Channel abroad.

But statements in the program yesterday [the network said it was not involved] in the "Wowowee VIP Bash" held at Bernstein nightclub on May 8. The party was organized by a certain Bigoin Productions.

According to a report from The Associated Press, over 200 fans paid $100 (P4,240) each to attend the event that was supposedly free program host Willie Revillame, co-hosts Marcel Bolinglot, Valerie Concepcion, Precious Lara Quigaman, Pokwang and Bill Enriquez, as well as the Wowowee DANCE dancers.

The report said that after holders complained they were made to wait for hours and that, in the end, only three dancers turned up.

In a statement, ABS-CBN corporate communications head Cielo Charlie said: "The 'Wowowee' production team received an invitation from the organizers of the private party, but [the team] never accepted, committed or agreed to bring the [cast], except for the three dancers... [The team was also] unaware that tickets [for the event] were being sold."

The network denied any association with Bigoin Productions.

After Ledac comes more powerful Jelac

By Christine O. Avendaño

MALACAÑANG CALLS IT A HISTORIC gathering: for the first time, leaders of the executive, judiciary and legislative branches will meet regularly to share the might of a full government in weathering the trade of law in the country.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye yesterday announced the formation of the also-consider Judiciary, Executive and Legislative Advisory Consultative Council (Jelac).

President Macapagal-Arroyo will lead the signing today at Malacañang of the memorandum of agreement creating the panel, which has expanded the Legislative and Executive Development Advisory Council, or Ledac.

The other signatories, representing the other branches, are Senate President Manuel Villar, Speaker Prospero Nograles and Chief Justice Reynato Puno.

"Before, we had Ledac, two branches working together. But now for the first time [on] have all three branches of government working together," Bunye told reporters.

The signing of the MOA would be "historic" itself because the signatories would be President Arroyo, Villar, Nograles and Puno, he said.

Bunye said Jelac would labor to ensure that reforms across the nation sought by the rule of law, "the bedrock of political stability and economic progress."

He said the Jelac would have also members with the the President as chair. The Vice President, the Senate President, the Speaker and the Chief Justice will act as members.

Also yesterday, Bunye clarified that for move to the Monetary Board would take place on July 3 and not June 23, as he had earlier said.

Bunye said that he would be filling one of two vacancies on the board. The terms of Mr. members Amyas Ruiz Bunoan and Dr. Vicente Valdepeñas are expiring, he said.

Profile of a Mom: *Kris Aquino*

Name: Kris Aquino-Yap

Kids: Josh, age 13 and Baby James, age 7

How motherhood has changed you: I am a bit more optimistic about life and I feel a lot more responsible because now there are 2 of them. And the 6½ year relationship with a 13 year-old compared to a 1 year-old, I have a different dynamic with Josh. With Baby James naman, ang-enjoy-in mo lang yung baby. I feel "Ay ang gandá-ng mundo, and sapá!"

How you manage to survive the inevitable case of career-induced stress: Luckily, I thrive on stress and it doesn't affect my skin that much! Plus I'm pleased with good genes, my mom and sisters all have great skin. People think my skin is flawless all the time, but the truth is, my skin also gets really oily. And when I'm stressed, I get rashes and bumps. It really pays to drink lots of water and get regular treatments of ReFirme® at Facial Care (I never you see the effects 48 hours later! You look glowing and rosy even without make-up). I also never forget to put on sunblock.

The best thing about being a woman: ...By far, motherhood is the best thing about being a woman. I love the fact that women can also play many roles in society and in the work environment, and that we can be both personal and professional in our dealings with people.

The last compliment you heard: ...When I interviewed Howie Severino [host of Dos] on his Dos USAP, he was really surprised that I'm now 37 years old, because in his words I look like a child! I think it's the regular Collagen Facials I get. My make-up adheres better and my skin tone is even.

What humbles you: ...Without being preachy about it, my day starts and ends with reading either a chapter or two from my devotionals and prayer books. And generally talaga yung outlook ko. I have a richer spiritual center.

What you miss about your youth: I don't miss anything. I totally love where I'm at. And right now, our entire family is focused on a new role - taking care of my mom. It's our turn to take care of her, so becoming mature and dependable is what I aspire to be at this moment.

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HOY GISING!!!

Alam naman nila na ang **SYSTEMS LOSS** allowance ay **NORMAL, USUAL** at **STANDARD** allowance na pinapayagang gamitin ng **LAHAT** ng Transmission at Distribution Utilities (DUs) sa buong mundo.

Sa **CEBU**, sa **DAVAO**, sa **ILOILO**, sa **ANGELES**, sa **DAGUPAN** – lahat ng DUs ay gumagamit ng **SYSTEMS LOSS** allowance.

Sa **America**, sa **Europa**, sa **Africa**, sa **Asia** – ganoon rin. Ang Average systems loss nga sa mga mayayamang bansa tulad ng **Norte America** at **Europa** ay humigit kumulang **7 %.**

Dapat naman alam ito ni Meralco Director **Winston Garcia**, kasi yung **Garcia Law office** sa Cebu ay prinsipal na abogado ng **Visayan Electric Company (VECO)** mula noon pang 1960's. Ang VECO ay gumagamit ng Systems Loss allowance.

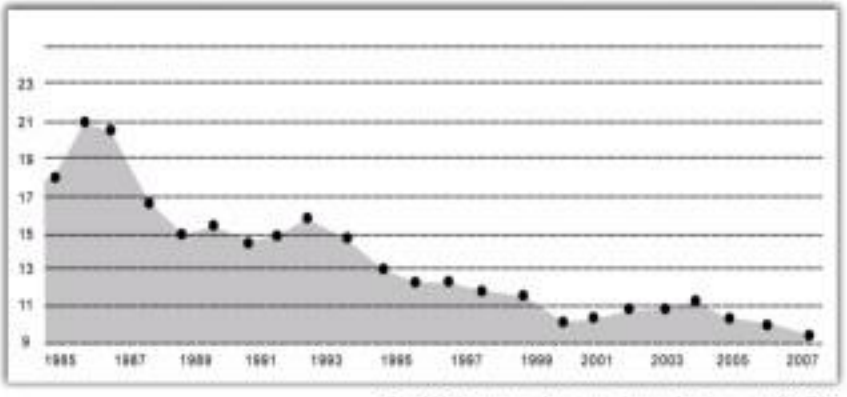
Sa Pilipinas, noong 1994, ang R.A. 7832 (Anti-Pilferage of Electricity) ay naglagay ng maximum deductible systems loss na 9.5 % para sa urban areas at 14% para sa rural areas.

Noong panahon ng Martial Law (wala pang 9.5% na maximum) ang systems losses ng Meralco na pinamumunuan ng mga **Marcos Cronies** ay umabot ng **21%.**

Pag-takeover nang Lopez Group noong 1987, bumaba ito sa 17% noong 1988 at 15% sa 1989.

Sa 2007, ang systems loss ng Meralco ay nasa 9.65%. Malapit na sa maximum na 9.5%

MERALCO HAS REDUCED SYSTEM LOSS TO ITS LOWEST LEVEL IN 27 YEARS



For 2007, system loss was brought down to 9.65%
– if losses go less than 9.5% all consumers will experience a rated reduction

Alam niyo bang magkakaroon tayong mga MERALCO consumers ng rate reduction kapag ang systems loss natin ay maging mas mababa sa 9.5%.

HOY GISING!!!
KONTING ARAL LANG!?!

World Bank gives RP $1.3M to improve state agencies

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE WORLD BANK HAS AGREED TO PROvide $1.3 million (P55.3 million) to finance grants to strengthen the Philippine government's fiscal planning, marketing and procurement systems.

"The bank yesterday announced it would get the money from its institutional development fund (IDF) to strengthen the capacity and improve the efficiency of the Commission on Audit ($500,000 or P22.6 million), Department of Budget and Management's procurement service group ($299,905 or P12.8 million), the Fiscal Planning Bureau ($300,000 or P12.8 million) and the Local Government Academy ($265,000 or P11.3 million).

"The World Bank is pleased to assist the government's efforts to build the capacities of state agencies. We expect these grants to the COA, DBM and LGA to improve government of public resources and delivery of services to the Filipino people," World Bank country director Bert Hofman said in a statement yesterday.

The grants to the DBM would provide technical assistance to build the department's capacity in policy-based budgeting under its medium-term expenditure framework, and strengthen the capacity of the procurement service in implementing the government's electronic procurement system.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya said the grant would enhance his department's capacity to develop sound policy analysis, which in turn would improve the quality of the recommendations given to the investment Development Budget Coordination Committee and to Malacañang.

"In turn, we hope this grant will help us continue to restructure the budget towards strategic policies and priority areas and be more responsive to the needs of the times through sound technical analysis and systematic internal consultations with key stakeholders on cross-cutting agency outputs/outcomes and multi-year implications of strategic policies," Andaya said.

The grant to the COA aims to improve the agency's effectiveness and efficiency in auditing government revenues and expenditures through a "risk-based integrated audit" that focuses on outputs and outcomes. Acting COA chair Reynaldo Villar said the grant would support the capacity and effectiveness of his agency.

"The project aims to integrate the different audit approaches that the COA is presently doing, more specifically the risk-based audit, procurement audit, compliance audit, fraud audit and performance audit," Villar said.

Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, speaking for the LGA, said the IDF grant would respond to the key development challenge of improving the competencies of LGUs under the decentralization program.

"Although there are a large number of training institutions providing training to LGUs, the effectiveness of these programs is undermined by fragmentation, duplication and lack of adequate coordination and oversight. This has resulted in poorly-targeted training programs and a mismatch between demand and supply of training," Puno said.

"The IDF grant will help build LGA capacity to rationalize the use of all of these resources," he said.

Correction

IN THE MAY 10 ISSUE, a three-page photo caption misspelled the name of the Research Department Head of the Philippine Daily Inquirer. Her name is Minerva Gonzales—not Gonsal.

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors, writing to the Top Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Alexandra Street, Makati City, fax (632) 896-6214/893-5861, e-mail address: topdesk@inquirer.com.ph

Complainants should link of full name or identifying data to be sent to the publisher, e-mail address, postal address and/or phone number (e.g. 897-1000 Local 888).

Transport strike sizzles in provinces

was disrupted in some cities, such as Legazpi, Bacolod and Davao, according to earlier reports.

(See related story on Page A9.)

"The Filipinos are angry and I say angry," Mayor Rodrigo Duterte said, showing up at a rally by some 200 protesters in Davao City. "The lives of the Filipinos are miserable because of the failure of the government to address the problem of the people."

"What the government must do is to cut RP86. It's the reason why the people are suffering. The Oil Deregulation Law is there already. What the national government must do is to sacrifice by cutting E-Vat," Duterte added.

A different story

It was a different story in Metro Manila, where no major incidents of disruption had been reported, at least by nightfall yesterday.

The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) said only 4 percent of 650,000 public utility vehicles (PUV) nationwide were under the Pasig banner.

Of about 20,000 PUVs in Mega Manila—or Metro Manila and nearby provinces—only about 20,000 were withdrawn, it said.

Director Geary Barias, Metro Manila police chief, said the transport strike was hardly felt in the metropolis and that "all over Metro Manila, transportation is normal."

Barias said the Libreng Sakay program of the Philippine National Police (PNP) had not been mobilized as of late in the afternoon because there were no reports of stranded passengers.

Businesses felt no effect

PNP spokesperson Chief Supt. Nestor Bastodon said only four regions reported some transport interruptions while it was only in Regions I and 11 where there were reported paralysis in transport operations.

MILITANT groups erect a stand at the Welcome Rotonda in Quezon City on Monday to press their demand to scrap the value-added tax on oil and support the transport strike. —RAFELITO S. GARCIA

LTFRB chair Thompson Lantion said: "Our regional directors reported that there was only 50-percent paralysis or less in some areas."

"Drivers felt afraid to leave passengers at the beach, fearing that they or their jeepneys would be harassed. But they apparently resumed operating toward the evening rush," he added.

Metro Manila commuters interviewed by the Inquirer gave different stories, although most said they did not notice any unusual drop in the number of operating jeepneys.

Some commuters in Pasay had a hard time getting jeepneys in the morning, while those in Manila said they saw many jeepneys that barely had passengers.

In Quezon City, Patrick Mayo, who lives in the Cubao area, said he left home at 11 a.m. and ran into the usual traffic volume.

Businesses said they felt no difference in the number of workers who turned up.

"There was no discussion. Labour Secretary [Arturo] Brion

Asian rights group seeks swift review of 'Abadilla 5' verdict

By Lala B. Salaverria

A HONG KONG-BASED HUMAN RIGHTS group has called on Chief Justice Reynato Puno not to delay the review of the conviction of five men for the killing of former Philippine Constabulary officer Col. Rolato de Abadilla 1996.

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), taking up the cudgels for the convicts dubbed the "Abadilla 5," also urged the Supreme Court to conduct a review of the acquittals against the police officers that were recently upheld by the Court of Appeals.

The appellate court, in an April 1 ruling, affirmed the Quezon City Regional Trial Court's finding that SPO2 Cesar Fortuno, Ramarios de Jesus, Leandro Lumanog, Joel de Jesus and Augusto Sindoy were guilty of killing Abadilla. It also reduced their death sentence to life in prison without parole.

It said the testimony of security guard Ferdilet Aleja was enough to convict the five men for Abadilla's fatal ambush.

Disappointing

Lumanog and Sindoy had questioned the appellate court's decision and called on the Supreme Court to consider that the commander then Bonoyan Brigade was responsible for Abadilla's murder.

In a May 5 letter to Puno, the AHRC said it was "disappointing" that the Court of Appeals had failed to conduct a real and substantial review of the arguments raised by the five men.

At the same time, it said it appreciated that the appellate court acted on the case.

The Abadilla 5 case was under review by the Supreme Court for five years before it was remanded to the Court of Appeals, which decided it after three years.

The AHRC sent questions on the five men's conviction reinstated, and their case should be discussed by the high court as soon as possible.

Just and reasonable

"The case can no longer afford to endure more delays. The SC justices must also ensure that the arguments invoked by the legal counsels of the accused are dealt with accordingly," the AHRC said in a letter signed by Mona Seeing Ita, office of the Urgent Appeals program.

The group also said the high court's review should be just and reasonable.

"We urge the judiciary to uphold and reassert its judicial integrity and credibility. It must ensure that every person who is deprived of [his] liberty is afforded [a] fair, impartial and credible review by the high tribunal," it added.

Copies of the AHRC letter were forwarded to the 14 justices of the Supreme Court.

Nani Perez wants one case junked

By TJ Burgonio

FORMER JUSTICE SECRETARY HERMOgenes Perez has asked the Sandiganbayan to junk the case of falsification of documents filed against him, saying the alleged offense was already included in another graft case he is facing arising from the $2-million extortion complaint lodged by former Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez.

In a May 9 motion to quash, Perez also asked the antigraft court to cancel the May 23 arraignment on the falsification case.

He argued the information in the case "does not charge any offense," and even if it did, the bail bond should be absorbed by a separate graft case. [illegible] can not and cannot, the Perez said.

He said the separate prosecution of the offenses would expose him to the "possibility of being punished twice for a single offense."

Separate cases

Perez is facing separate cases for two counts of graft, offense and falsification of public documents in the First, Second, Third and Fourth Divisions of the Sandiganbayan.

Those stemmed from Attached's charge that the then justice secretary tried to extort $2 million from him in exchange for withdrawing the government's demand that he disclose the personalities involved in a bribery-tainted power deal in 1998.

It was reported that former President Joseph Estrada was offered $14 million to approve the contract between Mabuhay Power Corp. and an Australian firm to build and run a hydroelectric plant in Laguna.

Perez's wife Rosario, brothers-in-law Ramon Arroyo and business associate Ernest Bondoc were charged in the co-accused in one case of graft and the robbery case.

In the motion, Perez said the Ombudsman had no authority to file the falsification case and hence the Sandiganbayan had no jurisdiction over it.

He claimed Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez took too much time in presenting the information, hence, she lost the authority to file the case.

"In the instant case, the Ombudsman charged her first in the investigation of the case against the defendant. Thus, while the affidavit-complaint of the private complainant was filed only on Dec. 22, 2002, it was only merely at your chronology that she decided the cases against the defendant," he said.

ANO ANG TOTOO?

Ang Meralco ad o ang kanilang website?

Dito bumibili ang Meralco ng kuryente	Ayon sa Meralco Website (as of 10 May 2008)		Ayon sa Meralco Ad (as of 10 May 2008)	
	%	Generation Charge	%	Generation Charge
NPC contract	35.96%	P 4.0173/kwh	40%	P 4.76/kwh
WESM o Spot market - walang kontrata	9.15%	P 10.6822/kwh	9%	P 6.02/kwh
Meralco IPPs	54.87%	P 4.5496/kwh	51%	
QPPL	6.87%	P 6.4340/kwh	8%	P 4.66/kwh
Sta Rita	31.31%	P 4.2749/kwh	28%	P 4.16/kwh
San Lorenzo	16.68%	P 4.2888/kwh	15%	P 4.17/kwh

Source: http://www.meralco.com.ph/Corporate/rates/gentrans.htm

Bakit mahal sa WESM?

Araw-araw at tingi ang bilihan ng Meralco sa Wesm. Depende kung ano ang kulang at ang di nasasakop sa mga kontrata nito sa sariling IPPs (QPPL, Sta. Rita at San Lorenzo) at ng kontrata sa NPC.
Kadalasan peak hours bumibili ang Meralco sa Wesm, mga oras na mataas ang demand. Kaya pinapatakbo ang "peaking plants" para maiwasan ang brownouts. Kaya mahal ang kuryente sa mga oras na ito. Ganyan ang merkado. Mas mahal pag tingi-an ang bilihan.

Bakit mas maliit ang kantidad na binibili sa NPC?

Mas binibigyan ng prayoridad ng Meralco ang Sta. Rita at San Lorenzo.
Mas inuna ang mga sweetheart deals ng Meralco sa kanyang affiliate companies.

Ang Sta. Rita at San Lorenzo ay pag-aari ng First Gen. Corporation.
Ang First Gen. ay kontrolado (66.23%) ng First Philippine Holdings Corp.
Ang Meralco ay kontrolado (33.4%) din ng First Philippine Holdings Corp.
Ang First Philippine Holdings Corp. ay kontrolado (43.2%) ng Benpres Holdings Corp.
Ang Benpres Holdings Corp. ay kontrolado (55.4%) ng Lopez Inc.

The issues being raised go beyond power rates. The National Power Corporation is in a better position to explain its power rate structure.

The shareholders of Meralco outside of the Lopezes want to keep Meralco profitable to get a good return from their investments. But these same shareholders want to be assured that Meralco's profit are earned with honor.

Shareholders not within the ambit of the Lopezes' power want to stop Meralco management's double talk. Only by being transparent can all of us, stakeholders and consumers, be assured that we are being charged fair and equitable power rates.

PROTECT THE PUBLIC, LOWER ELECTRIC COST!

Paid advertisement by National Labor Union

Piston fails to ignite in Metro but succeeds in provinces

By Inquirer Bureaus

LARGELY IGNORED IN METRO MANILA, yesterday's strike call from Piston struck a responsive chord in the provinces, strike leaders said.

In Davao City, Edel Gorospe, spokesperson of Piston in Southern Mindanao, claimed 90 percent of the public transport sector did not ply their routes.

Senior Supt. Julius Monreal, city police chief, said only 56 percent of public transport in the city was paralyzed, pointing out that some buses stayed on the roads.

Still, Davao City Administrator Wendell Belando announced there would be no work in the afternoon for city hall employees.

The city government also deployed buses for stranded commuters.

Gorospe said the strike was a success. "Out of the estimated 7,000 public utility vehicles (PUVs) only about 2,000 plied their routes," he said.

Colleges and universities suspended classes as well.

In Cagayan de Oro City, the local transport group Solidarity Transport Alliance in Region X (STARC) claimed it was able to paralyze public transportation by 95 percent. Police said it was only 85 percent.

Police harassment

But several drivers in Cagayan de Oro complained of harassment, saying police in Barangay Puerto disallowed them from continuing with their protest.

Father Antonio Alcon of the Promotion of Church People's Response said members and officials of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan were also harassed by the police.

In the cities of Tagum and Panabo in Davao del Norte, the militant Bilusang Magkakaisang Pilipinas said 90 percent of public transport drivers and operators joined the strike.

In Bomon City, there was 95-percent transportation paralysis, according to Willie Cubillas, president of the Bomon Tanaquon Federation.

At least 70 percent of public transport drivers joined the strike in Bigan City.

Rains not a problem

Despite a heavy downpour, at least 90 percent of public transport in General Santos was also down.

There was no transport strike in other parts of central Mindanao.

The strike apparently also had a big impact in other areas.

Public transport was paralyzed by 95 percent in Bicol and by 99 percent in Southern Tagalog, according to transport group organizers.

Transport paralysis was 80 percent in Aklan and 70 percent in the provinces of Antique, Camarines Sur and Camarines Norte as all route, said Joel Sorania, president of Gondor-Piston in Bicol.

He said that in Virac, capital of Catanduanes, transportation was 100-percent paralyzed.

90-percent success

The strike was a 90-percent success in the Cordillera province, according to Landie Hilario, secretary general of the Bantay group, a member organization of Piston.

Mingo said the strike was 90-percent successful in Laguna, Batangas and Cavite and around 80 percent successful in Quezon.

Police disputed the group's claim, saying the strike affected only 30 percent of public vehicles in Laguna.

Representatives nevertheless said there were no jeepi plying the Calamba-to-Sta. Rosa, Batangas route as of noon.

Free rides

In Legazpi City in Albay, six-by-six trucks from the Philippine Army, Philippine Navy and Philippine National Police manned the city to help stranded passengers.

Old and young people crowded themselves at the "Libreng Sakay," with most of the passengers employees headed to and from work and women going to market.

Some of the passengers were managers who simply scrambled for joy rides.

In a major business process outsourcing company in Legazpi, more than 50 percent of the employees in its contact department were absent from work, said an employee.

Gloria Quintela, branch manager of the Philippine Christian Bookstore in Legazpi, said sales were down by up to 60 percent.

In San Pablo City, a bus conductor was hurt when members of striking transport groups seized a Manila-bound Jam Liner bus on the national highway, said Senior Supt. Felipe Rojas, Laguna provincial director.

Rojas identified the victim as Rustino Sosolilla, 28.

Strikers in Visayas

He said the striking drivers tried to harass and force bus drivers and conductors to join the strike.

Jeepneys and tricycles running San Pablo City were warned not to ply their routes, otherwise they would be harmed, operators said.

Mingo denied that Piston had ordered its members to threaten nonstriking drivers.

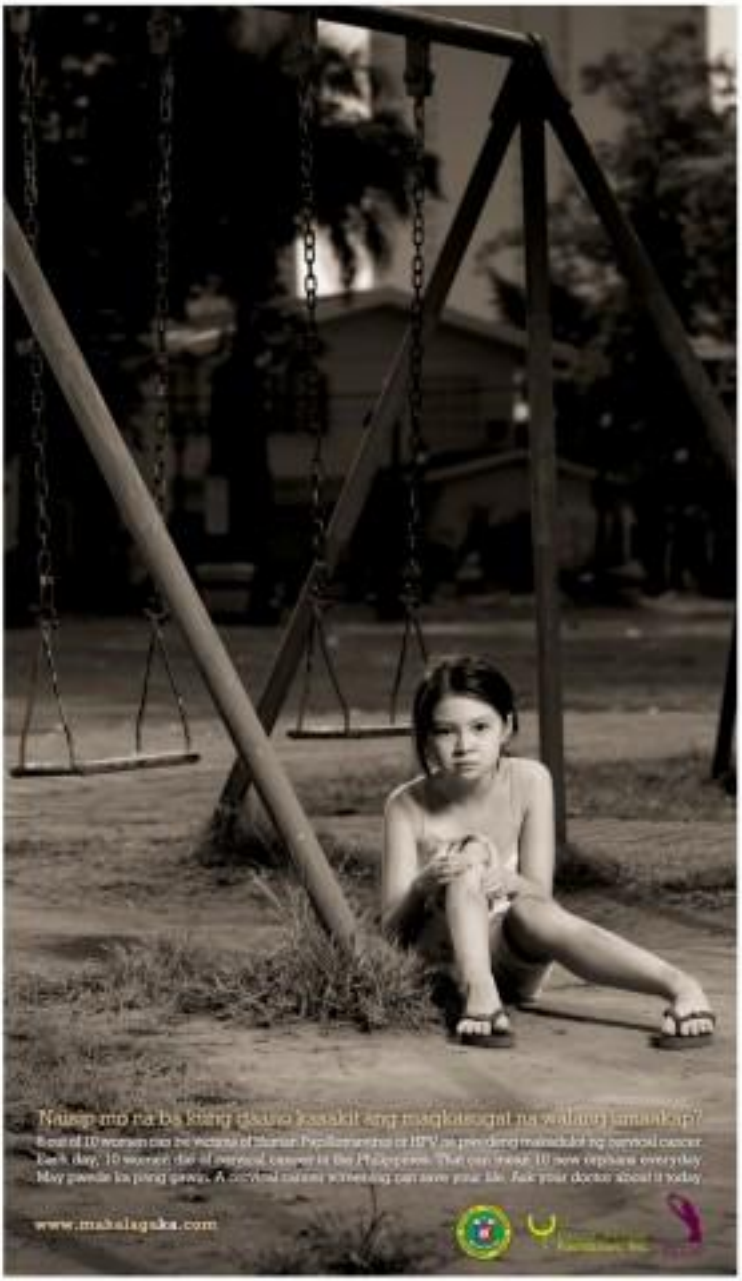
At least 90 percent of public transportation in the cities of Bacolod, Iloilo and Roxas prevailed in a halt in the start of a two-day strike in those areas.

Bacolod police director Senior Supt. Bonife Quebral said the strike affected 95 to 97 percent of public transport in the city.

Jessie Ortega, secretary general of the United Negros Drivers Operators Center, said the strike paralyzed 97 percent of public transportation in Bacolod.

Drivers in Cebu City did not join the strike for exactly reasons. Reports from Ayessa Tupaz, Dennis Jay Santos, Ma. Cecilia Rodriguez, Franklin Caligpid, Edwin D. Fernandez, Charlie C. Señase, Priscilla Lim, Aquiles Z. Zosa, Rachel Uriel and Orlando Dicay, Inquirer Mindanao; Romula Peñaranda, Ephraim Aguilar and Mike Gallarde Calijpit, Inquirer Southern Luzon; and By Carla P. Gomez and Nestor B. Burgos Jr., Nestor Burgos Jr. and Philjo Cellan, Inquirer Visayas

NO MONKEY BUSINESS A Bagyo City driver brings along his pet monkey to join a protest march in support of a transport strike on Monday.



DPWH: Heavy trucks to blame for damaged roads

By Margaux C. Ortiz

OVERLOADED TRUCKS are the major culprits behind the deterioration of roads in the country, the Department of Public Works and Highways said yesterday.

Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. said he had instructed all DPWH regional directors to provide trucks at weigh bridges to make sure the carriers stayed at commercial trucks at the expenses of the truckers.

"As mandated by Republic Act 8794 or the Anti-Overloading Act, violators must pay a fine of 25 percent of the Motor Vehicles Users' Charge," Ebdane said at a press conference at the DPWH office.

"While they are penalized, however, they are not prosecuted. Data using the road networks carrying their excess weight," he said.

He said the new policy would ensure that violators not only paid the penalty, but also unloaded their excess weight before continuing with their trip.

Ebdane said the cost of maintaining 50,000 kilometers of national roads was about P13.5 billion annually.

"The truckers allege they would lose P5 billion if they adhere to the weight limit, but their continuing violations of the law involves P20 billion worth of damages to the road networks yearly," Ebdane said.

He said that based on a study conducted by the Road Information and Management Support System from January to October 2006, the highest number of overloading offenses took place in northern Luzon, specifically on the Manila North Road in Regions I and III, Cagayan Valley Road in Region II and III, and San Fernando-Olongapo Road in Region III.

Other areas where the law is heavily broken include the Cebu-Toledo Wharf Road in Region VII and the Bicutan City-Cavinti-Los Baños-Calamba Road in Region IV.

"Noncompliance with the axle-to-axle loading law has led to the rapid deterioration of the road networks, resulting in repeated repair work," Ebdane said.

He noted the Philippines had the highest allowable axle load limit in the world. He said the DPWH had recommended to Congress that this be reviewed.

"Compared to the 13.5 metric ton per axle limit prescribed by the law, other countries have the following limits: United States, 9.1 MT/axle; United Kingdom, 11.5 MT/axle; France, 13 MT/axle; Thailand, 9.1 MT/axle; Pakistan, 11 MT/axle, and India 9.2 MT/axle," Ebdane said.

He added: "We are also studying the possibility of holding the truck operators civilly and criminally liable for their willful and recurrent violations of the anti-overloading law."

Climate change talk at UP

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE Philippines will hold a resource seminar on climate change at 2 p.m. on May 14 at the ASEAN Conference Hall at UP Diliman.

Professor Perry S. Ong, director of UP's Institute of Biology, will talk on "Anthropogenic Global Warming: Beyond the Hype, Doing the Right Thing for the Right Reasons."

Ong, a wildlife biology professor, said he would give an alternative view to global warming as espoused by Al Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Ong is president of the Wildlife Conservation Society of the Philippines and of Earth Rights, People's Rights Inc.

SOCIAL HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION
a subsidiary of National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Social Housing Finance Corporation (SHFC), through its Approved Corporate Budget for 2008, intends to apply the sum of **Php 1,000,000.00** being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to participate under the contract for the Provision of Cervical Reinforcement Shoring and other Allied Services for the Social Housing Finance Corporation for the Year 2008 (Re-bid) (Invitation dated 29 April 2008). Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.

The SHFC now invites interested supply organizations to apply for eligibility and to participate in the bidding of the hereunder project:

Project Name	Description	Quantity	TOTAL
Provision of Cervical Reinforcement Shoring and other Allied Services for SHFC for One (1) year	Items: – Head Office – Regional Offices	1/2 1/2	01
	Manpower: – Head Office	1	1
	Drivers: – Head Office	1	1
	Utility (Carpenter): – Head Office	1	1
	Laborer/Helper Electrician: – Head Office	1	1

Contract Duration : One Year (From date of Effectivity)
Effectivity Date : Upon signing of the Contract

The Corporation is an eligible bidder as mentioned in Section 3 of the Bidding Documents. The Prospective bidders should have the experience in undertaking a similar project within the last five (5) years with an amount of at least 50% of the project cost indicated in the Bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall serve as the preliminary "pass/fail" criteria. Post qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All participants desirous to participate in the Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. No. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

Interested Bidder(s) may obtain further information from SHFC and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00am – 5:00 p.m.

A complete set of Bidding documents may be purchased by interested Bidder(s) from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of Php 5,000.00. The method of payment will be in cash/ check only. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The SHFC will receive the Bid Envelopes open to all interested parties on **May 30, 2008, 2:00 pm** at the 4th Floor, SHFC Plaza, 5717 Ysmael de Roxas, Makati City.

Bids exceeding the approved budget for the contract or the ABC, or those with incomplete requirements including the failure of the bidder to submit any of the requirements mentioned in Section 25.3 of the Revised IRR of R.A. 9184 shall be rejected outright. Late bids shall not be accepted. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidder's representatives who choose to attend at the address below.

The SHFC reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, to annul the Bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

SOCIAL HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION
Attn: Chairperson, BAC Secretariat
4th Floor, SHFC Plaza, 5717 Ysmael de Roxas, Makati City
Tel No. 8173180
E-mail Add: shfc@pldtdsl.net
Website Add: www.shfc.gph.com

(Sgd.) EDUARDO T. MANOTO
BAC Chairman

(Pub.: May 13, 2008)

SOCIAL HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION
a subsidiary of National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Social Housing Finance Corporation (SHFC), through its Approved Corporate Budget for 2008, intends to apply the sum of **Php 3,000,000.00** being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to participate under the contract for the Provision of Janitorial Services for the Social Housing Finance Corporation for One Year under Project Number 2008-07. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.

The SHFC now invites interested supply organizations to apply for eligibility and to participate in the bidding of the hereunder project:

Project Name	Description	Quantity	TOTAL
Provision of Janitorial Services for Social Housing Finance Corporation for One Year	Janitorial Personnel: – Head Office – Regional Offices – Cavite – Cebu – Davao – Cagayan de Oro – Iligan – Cotabato	4 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	11

Contract Duration : One Year (From date of Effectivity)
Effectivity Date : Upon signing of the Contract

The Corporation is an eligible bidder as mentioned in Section 3 of the Bidding Documents. The Prospective bidders should have the experience in undertaking a similar project within the last five (5) years with an amount of at least 50% of the project cost indicated in the Bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall serve as the preliminary "pass/fail" criteria. Post qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All participants desirous to participate in the Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. No. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

Interested Bidder(s) may obtain further information from SHFC and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00am – 5:00 p.m.

A complete set of Bidding documents may be purchased by interested Bidder(s) from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of Php 5,000.00. The method of payment will be in cash/ check only. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The SHFC will receive the Bid Envelopes open to all interested parties on **May 30, 2008, 10:00 am** at the 4th Floor, SHFC Plaza, 5717 Ysmael de Roxas, Makati City.

Bids exceeding the approved budget for the contract or the ABC, or those with incomplete requirements including the failure of the bidder to submit any of the requirements mentioned in Section 25.3 of the Revised IRR of R.A. 9184 shall be rejected outright. Late bids shall not be accepted. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidder's representatives who choose to attend at the address below.

The SHFC reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, to annul the Bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

SOCIAL HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION
Attn: Chairperson, BAC Secretariat
4th Floor, SHFC Plaza, 5717 Ysmael de Roxas, Makati City
Tel No. 8173180
E-mail Add: shfc@pldtdsl.net
Website Add: www.shfc.gph.com

(Sgd.) EDUARDO T. MANOTO
BAC Chairman

(Pub.: May 13, 2008)

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
Manila, Philippines

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project/Brief Description	One (1) unit Annealing Acceptance Tests and Assessment for the complete installation and commissioning of one (1) unit new Water Cooled Chiller in the Security Plant Compound located at East Service Road, Taguig City, per BSP Scope of Work, Equipment Schedule, Drawings and Technical Specifications.
Approved Budget for the Contract	P1,100,000.00
Contract/Job Period	Within two hundred twenty-five (225) calendar days after receipt of Notice to Proceed which must be received within five (5) calendar days after receipt of copy of the approved contract

Prospective bidders should have undertaken a similar requirement awarded and completed from CY2003 to present amounting to at least 50% of the Approved Budget for Contract (ABC). The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall serve as the primary "pass/fail" criteria. Post qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All participants desirous to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. No. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

	Activities	Schedule
1.	Issuance of the Invitation	Starting 13 May 2008
2.	Site Inspection	21 May 2008, 10:00 a.m.
3.	Pre-bid Conference	26 May 2008, 10:00 a.m.
4.	Opening of Bids	27 May 2008, 2:00 p.m.
5.	Bid Evaluation	Three (3) working days after the opening of bids
6.	Post-qualification	Three (3) working days after the opening of bids
7.	Notice of Award	Within seven (7) calendar days after receipt of the post-qualification report

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of non-refundable amount of P5,000.00.

The BSP reserves the right to reject any and all bids, to declare a failure of bidding at any time prior to the contract award, or not to award the contract, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

Prospective bidders are invited to witness the opening of bids.

(Sgd.) JUAN DE ZUBIRI, JR.
Chairman

(Pub.: May 13, 2008)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

PG Flex
P.V.C. Sheeting Products

MARUYAMA®
TARPAULIN

The public is hereby informed that **Premium Plastic Group Manufacturing Corp.** is the duly registered owner of trademark / service mark – **PG FLEX** and **MARUYAMA** with Certificate of Registration No. 42005010634 and No. 41996115046 respectively, issued by the Intellectual Property Philippines, and is being produced / manufactured under the name of **PPGMC**.

WARNING is therefore given that anyone caught selling, buying, manufacturing of any similar or colorable imitation of the above registered marks shall be prosecuted with full force, criminally and civilly for its infringement.

Please direct any information concerning unauthorized manufacture, importation, distribution, use, sale of the above registered marks owned by **PPGMC**, to our lawyers –

THE LAW FIRM of (RET.) JUDGE MADAYAG & ASSOCIATES
Raffles Corporate Tower, Ortigas Business Center,
Emerald Avenue, Pasig City
CP: 09228883098

REWARD will be given to the informant, while confidentiality shall be assured by our lawyers for the protection of the informant.

INQUIRER
Dare to ask. Be an Inquirer.

'Climate change making climbing harder'

Everest conqueror sees effects of global warming on latest trek

By Tarra Quismundo

BELOW ZERO TEMPERATURES, TRAWLED ice walls and blasting blizzards made the 18-hour trek up Island Peak in Khumbu, Nepal, no May 1 mere treacherous for four Filipino climbers, among them, Mt. Everest mountaineer Leo Oracion.

"It's frustrating... it was harder to climb now because of the receding glaciers. The ridges were narrower so it's harder to cross. What was supposed to be a beginners-level climb [became] an intermediate-to-hard climb because much of the ice had melted," said Oracion upon arriving at the Ninoy Aquino International airport yesterday.

Oracion, a Coast Guard officer and one of the first Filipinos to summit the world's tallest peak in May 2006, had climbed Island Peak, a 6,189-meter ice mountain, twice in the last two years. This time, he observed that much of the ice peak had changed.

"What used to be an ice wall has turned into a rock wall... The lake in the mountain which you filled with water from the glaciers is larger... The locals have been warned that if the barriers of that natural dams breaks, there may be a flashflood," Oracion said, referring to the lake situated at an altitude of some 5,000 meters.

"The effects of global warming are really alarming," he stressed.

Unsettling trend

The melting of the ice on the planet's polar ice caps and snow-capped peaks have been observed in recent years, an alarming trend that scientists blame on excessive carbon dioxide emissions that seam up the earth as they are trapped within the atmosphere.

Experts recently listed the effects of global warming on the Philippines and warned that in the next 20 to 50 years, rising sea levels linked to melting glaciers may likely submerge 11 of the country's 17 regions, displacing some 20 to 30 million people.

Ivy Glassman, the only woman in the expedition, endured blizzards and snow storms during her first alpine climb. The 48-year-old banker, who took up the challenge of scaling mountains just three years ago, had to undergo four months of endurance training to prepare for her debut up a snow peak.

"Because of global warming, the glaciers had melted, the ridges were narrower and we had to be very careful in crossing them using our crampons (spiked metal plates attached to boots to safely walk on ice). It was a very technical climb," she said.

Oracion climbed Island Peak with Montenar, Jude Hermen and Gonzalo Almeda. Jellore inadventure team hosted 8000, as a practice climb for the attempted conquest of the world's 14 tallest mountains.

The team was up the mountain for roughly a month, spending around 20 days to acclimatize to the mountain weather and biting cold temperatures.

"There's no such thing as modern facilities. But it's a good way to make friends. It's a great workout and it's the ultimate adventure," said a tearful Maceiras, who was overcome with emotion retiring her Island Peak experience.

Oracion, who scaled Mt. Everest ahead of fellow Filipino Pastor Nimrin and Dario Gardener in May 2006, said he hoped to complete the trek by 13 more of the world's tallest mountains in the next five to seven years.

The peaks, all higher than 8,000 meters, are to be found in Nepal, Pakistan, China and Tibet.

Each expedition costs around $35,000 (P1,560) and Oracion said he was counting on sponsors to help him achieve his dream.

He said co-adventurers in Everest 9000 aim to climb 8,200-meter Mt. Cho-Oyu next. This is the ninth tallest mountain in the world located some 20 kilometers west of Mt. Everest.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, May 13, 2008
6th Week in Ordinary Time
Our Lady of Fátima

(a) Reading: Acts 1:12-14
Gospel: Mk 6:14-29

The disciples had forgotten to bring more bread and had only one loaf with them in the boat. Then Jesus warned them, "Keep your eyes open and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod." And they said to one another, "We have this—we have no bread."

Aware of this, Jesus asked them, "Why are you talking about the loaves—are you dense? Do you not see or understand? Are your minds closed? 'Have you eyes and fail to see, and ears that don't hear?' And do you not remember when I broke the five loaves among five thousand? How many baskets full of left-overs did you collect?" They answered, "Twelve." "And having seven among the five thousand, how many wicker baskets of leftovers did you collect?" They answered, "Seven." Then Jesus said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

A small amount of yeast has powerful effect upon the dough. Just so, no person could a powerful influence upon a large group. The negative, disparaging attitude of the Pharisee and the corrupt practices of Herod can exert a corrosive influence upon the people of Israel.

On the contrary, a nation and indeed the human race would be saved by the wisdom and compassion of Jesus, along with His willingness to lay down His life for His flock. Through our baptism, we are configured to Jesus Christ and are become light to the world, salt of the earth, and yeast for this troubled world of ours.

US airlifts aid . . .

From page A1

military trucks. Two more air shipments were scheduled to land on Tuesday.

Boston's team on Sunday said that the official death toll from Cyclone Nargis on May 3 had jumped by about 3,000 to 28,458 with another 33,416 still missing.

But Richard Horsey, a spokesperson for UN humanitarian operations, said a toll of 100,000 dead or missing was possible based on "reports that we are receiving from our teams in the field from the authorities there."

2M people in need

"It's still a very serious situation. There are up to 2 million people in urgent need of assistance. Assistance is getting through," but not fast enough, Horsey said. The Associated Press in Bangkok, Thailand.

"There are four key requirements in any situation like this—clean drinking water, shelter, medical support and food," Horsey said, stressing all four necessities were sorely lacking.

In the worst-affected Irrawaddy delta, people were surviving in miserable conditions—hundreds cramped in monasteries, sleeping on the floor. Others were camping in the open, drinking dirty water contaminated by human feces or dead bodies and animal carcasses.

Heavy rains were forecast this week, which would further hinder aid delivery.

"So far we have enough water by collecting rain. But we do not have food anymore," said U Pannyale, the abbot of a monastery in Pyapon town in the delta.

The junta has been sharply criticized for its handling of the disaster, from failing to provide adequate warnings about the approaching storm to responding slowly to offers of help.

Restricted entry of foreign relief

Though international assistance has started trickling in, the few foreign relief workers who have been allowed entry have been restricted to Rangoon, Burma's largest city and former capital. Only a handful of aid workers have succeeded in getting past checkpoints into the worst-affected areas.

The junta is also insisting on handling the aid distribution through its feared military which has ruled the isolated country since 1962.

"The government is very controlling," said U Pannyale. "Those who want to give directly to the victims get into trouble. They have to give to the government or do it secretly. They follow international aid trucks everywhere. They don't want others to take credit. That's the government."

Highlighting the many challenges ahead, a Red Cross boat carrying rice, drinking water and other goods hit more than 1,000 people sank on Sunday near hard-hit Bogalay town. All four aid workers on board were safe.

Horsey said the boat sinking demonstrated the "major logistical bottleneck in getting this [aid] stuff from Yangon out to the people who need it, particularly in the delta."

He said authorities must allow not only goods to come in urgently but also expedite visas for foreign experts and allowing equipment into the country.

"The authorities of the country need to open up to an international relief effort. There aren't enough boats, trucks, helicopters in the country to run the kind of effort of the scale we need," Horsey said. "It's urgent that the authorities do open themselves up."

He said the United Nations was getting "a lot of reports" of widespread diarrhea outbreaks in the delta, but not on an epidemic scale. Malaria and dengue could also become a problem.

"But basic shelter, clean water and emergency food will be the thing that if we can get it out fast enough will prevent hopefully those major problems," Horsey said.

The junta's refusal to accept foreign help seems from its strained relations with the international community, especially the West, which has regularly criticized the regime's refusal to allow democracy.

US considered an enemy

Relations are especially uneasy with the United States, which the junta considers an enemy.

The US plans carried 12,700 kilograms of supplies, including mosquito nets, blankets and water in an operation dubbed "Joint Task Force Caring Response."

US Marine spokesperson Lt. Col. Douglas Powell said the United States had 17,000 servicemen and four ships in the region for an annual military exercise, Cobra Gold, which could be harnessed to help the survey mission.

Those US ships dropped in the Bay of Bengal were sailing closer to Burma on Monday, nearly to aid cyclone victims if they are given permission, Vice Admiral Doug Crossbie told reporters in Jakarta, Indonesia.

British aid group Oxfam on Sunday said that the death toll could rise as high as 1.5 million if people do not get clean water and sanitation soon.

"A natural disaster is turning into a humanitarian catastrophe of genuinely epic proportions in significant part because of the malign neglect of the regime," British Foreign Secretary David Miliband said. AP

Burma crisis shames Asean, say critics

From page A1

more," said Lim Kit Siang from the Asean Inter-Parliamentary Caucus which was formed in 2004 to push for democratic reform in Burma.

The crisis has erupted a year after the 10-nation bloc signed a landmark charter affirming its commitment to human rights and democratic ideals and setting out principles and rules for members.

'Mockery of the charter'

"It makes a total mockery of the charter which is now entirely meaningless. All Asean foreign ministers should convene an emergency meeting on this issue," said Lim, a leading figure in Malaysia's opposition.

"With Myanmar as a member, Asean should have set the lead and persuaded the military junta to open up or face severe and possibly unpalatable," he said, adding that the affair cast doubt over Asean's earlier statement.

"The whole question of its utility its relevance, its pertinence is critical after years of failure to act on the Myanmar issue," he added.

Lim said that Malaysia's parliamentary opposition leader, Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, would intrupt on Monday to table an emergency debate on how to push and save Burma.

Since Cyclone Nargis hit southwest Burma on May 3, only a trickle of aid has been allowed by the isolative military regime, passing survivors at gunpoint with a lack of food, clean water, shelter and sanitation.

The military government has rebuffed foreign aid organizations by refusing to allow their staff to enter the country to direct the relief operation.

Asean chief Surin Pitsuwan has written to the Burmese junta seeking "quick admission" of aid from the region, but unlike Western governments has stopped short of condemning the junta.

But he rejected criticism that Asean was not doing enough.

"We are working full time, 24/7, to that all the contributions and supplies can be transported as quickly," he said last week. "Every capital is doing its best to express its concern."

Thailand's Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej also expressed frustration at the United States and Britain for expecting him to act as a go-between in the crisis while criticizing his links with the country's ruling generals.

"I already said three that I am not Myanmar's spokesman," he said on the weekend.

'Black sheep'

The wrangle with Burma is just the latest to vexes headaches for Asean members, who are known to the "black sheep of the family" bringing the bloc into disrepute and dominating regional gatherings.

Debbie Stothard from the Alternative Asean Network on Burma (Altsean), a network of prodemocracy activists in Asean, said its response to the disaster was "absolutely shocking."

"It hasn't come up with any statement, hasn't thrown its weight in effort to persuade the regime to open down to aid. This is the one time humanity should be more important than diplomacy," she said.

Stothard said the Asean "will pay its silence" with increased stigma. Burmese citizens across its borders have already been to an estimated million Burmese citizens, both legal and undocumented.

"There was already a flood crisis in Asean and that affected many, many of the country," she said.

"So if there's no rebuilding, quickly the country's going to collapse and it's going to force more people to leave the country in search of

s

AgWHERE children run through what is the devastation and destruction brought by Cyclone Nargis. Here they stand in a damaged structure in a village of hard-hit Bogalay town in southern Burma on Sunday. AFP

China earthquake a chilling reminder of Tangshan tragedy

BEIJING—THE HUGE EARTHQUAKE THAT struck China on Monday was a chilling reminder of the country's seismic vulnerability. Many believe the devastation of the Tangshan quake which killed more than 240,000.

Although the immediate death toll of Monday's quake was not on the scale of the tragedy that hit the northern coal mining city more than 30 years ago, some of the 7.9-magnitude tremor in Sichuan province would have brought back painful memories for survivors.

The Tangshan earthquake was one of the 20th century's deadliest natural disasters.

Measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale—the same as Monday's quake—the Tangshan tremor destroyed more than 90 percent of the buildings in the city in Hebei province, after it struck at 3:42 in the morning of July 28, 1976, shaking the region for 15 seconds.

Nearly one quarter of the city's one million residents died in the quake and the subsequent 7.1 degree aftershock that struck 15 hours after the initial jolt, according to official figures.

However, the death toll was only announced three years after the event with the country looking to widespread speculation that the actual death toll could be up to three times higher.

Failed to heed warning

The US Geological Survey says on its website that 655,000 people may have died in the Tangshan earthquake.

Controversy lingers over whether the Chinese government could have done more to prevent the enormous loss of life after receiving warnings from seismologists of an imminent quake in the area.

While authorities in Beijing and Tangshan failed to heed the warnings, officials from Qingdong county, about 75 kilometers from Tangshan, did.

Their reaction meant nearly 100,000 lives in the county of more than 470,000 people despite more than 180,000 buildings being flattened.

Monday's quake struck 91 km from Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province and a major population centre with more than 12 million people, and about 200 km from Chongqing and two populations of 30 million.

China is particularly sensitive to major earthquakes as it lies on top of three tectonic plates that are constantly shifting against each other. In 1920 and again in 2002, separate earthquakes each left some 200,000 dead.

Around two thirds of China's big cities are located in high-risk quake zones, with more people packing into them. AFP

Earthquake ...

Point page A1

cold score of the 31 venues for the Olympics in the capital and other host cities had been damaged.

"They say earthquake proof to a high degree and no damage was done," said Jim Webb, deputy director of the Olympic media and communications office.

Sichuan said its reporters in Aoyuan town-ship, about 100 km from the epicenter in Wenchuan, saw buried teenagers wriggling to break loose from underneath the rubble of the three-story school "while others were crying out for help."

Arms sticking out

Photos posted on the Internet and found on the Chinese search engine Baidu showed what said a teen sticking out of the rubble of the school as dozens of people worked to free them, using small mechanical winches in their hands to move concrete slabs.

Another photo from Wenchuan showed what appeared to have been a six-story building flattened, ripped away from taller buildings of grey concrete.

More than 5,000 soldiers and police have been ordered into Sichuan to help in the disaster relief.

The airport in Sichuan's provincial capital, Chengdu, was closed and roads were clogged with traffic after the earthquake, state television reported.

The quake struck at 2:28 p.m., according to the US Geological Survey. It was measured about 10 km below the surface. A series of smaller aftershocks followed.

Phones jammed

Calls into the city did not go through as panicked residents quickly overloaded the telephone system.

"In Chengdu, mobile telecommunication satellites have experienced jams and thousands of servers were out of service," said Shi Yuzhu, deputy chief executive officer of China Mobile.

Although it was difficult to telephone Chengdu, an hour's station, Reuters Beijing bureau, sent a text message to The Associated Press saying there were power and water outages there.

"Traffic jams, no running water, power cuts, everyone sitting in the streets, patients evacuated from hospitals sitting outside and waiting," he said.

Sichuan told An underground water pipe ruptured near the city's southern railway station, flooding a main thoroughfare.

Earthquake tips

State television broadcast tips for anyone trapped in the earthquake: "If you're buried, keep calm and conserve your energy. Seek water and food, and wait patiently for rescue," CCTV said.

The earthquake also rattled buildings in Beijing 1,500 km to the north. The Chinese capital is expected to be full of hundreds of thousands of foreign visitors when the Olympics start on Aug. 8.

Many Beijing office towers were evacuated. Premier Wen Jiabao arrived in Chengdu last before he cannot be reached for an hour.

People ran screaming into the streets in other cities, where many residents said they had never been in an earthquake.

In Fuyang, 1,110 km to the east in Anhui province, chandeliers in the lobby of the Buckingham Palace Hotel swayed. "We've never felt anything like this our whole lives," said a hotel employee.

Patients evacuated

Stations at the Fuyang People's No. 1 Hospital were evacuated. An hour after the quake, a half dozen patients in blue striped pajamas stood outside the hospital.

Close to the epicenter in Dongqing, Lu Dingxin was napping while her mother watched TV on the 19th floor of a hotel. "I suddenly felt the bed shaking and then realized it must be an earthquake," said the 42-year-old Lu. "So I just put on slippers and helped my mother down to the ground floor."

In Shanghai, skyscrapers swayed and most office occupants were running into the streets.

The quake was also felt as far away as Thailand, Vietnam and Pakistan. *Reports from AP, AFP and Reuters*

What would I do to protect myself from cervical cancer?

Everything I can

If you think cervical cancer and related diseases can't happen to you, think again. They're caused by certain types of a common virus called HPV. And 5 out of every 6 new HPV infections occur in women aged 15 to 24.

In the Philippines, according to the 2005 Philippine Cancer Facts and Estimates published by the Philippine Cancer Society Inc., cervical cancer was the second leading cause of cancer death in women in 2004. In 2005, 7217 new cases and 3667 deaths due to cervical cancer were estimated to have occurred. This meant that there were approximately 10 Filipina women deaths each day due to cervical cancer.

Did you know that there are several ways to help prevent cervical cancer and other diseases caused by HPV? These are things you can do now to help protect your future.

Learn everything you can
Do everything you can
Talk to a doctor today.

For more information go to
www.everythingican.com.ph

MSD

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Natural beauty

GOD GAVE US OIL BUT TOOK AWAY ALMOST everything else—the weather (it's always very hot), the economy and the water. In your case, God did not give special but gave you paradise," a visiting Israeli journalist told a Filipino journalist somewhere in the '80s. The Israelis may have been exaggerating a bit when he talked of the Philippines as a paradise, but he may have seen something

EDITORIAL here that we Filipinos didn't and up to now probably still don't see.

But we are now waking up to the natural beauty of many parts of our country. In the '80s, the "stars" were Siargao and Bohol. In the '90s and up to now it is Boracay, but it is fast becoming polluted and overcrowded largely because of lack of systematic planning. Recently, Catanduanes has, with its powdery white sand, won in the limelight because it was where the French edition of the very popular reality TV show, "Survivor," was shot.

This summer should be as good a time as any for Filipinos to discover the paradise that is their country—more than 7,000 glittering emerald islands in deep blue, crystal-clear waters teeming with a wide variety of marine life. For those who may have forgotten, here's a quick list:

Northern Luzon: Pangasinan's Hundred Islands, where one can rent an island for a day and swim, frolic or simply relax. Region four, despite the pollution, remains a cool place to stay in during summer; Tagaytay with its top-branded mountain range, limestone cliffs, forests, sylvan marine caves; and the 2,000-year-old Banaue rice terraces, a Unesco World Heritage Site, the eighth wonder of the world.

Southern Luzon: Puerto Galera in Oriental Mindoro, a marine reserve and beach resort, endowed with coves, fine sandy beaches and still low coral reefs for snorkeling; Pagsanjan Rapids and Falls, a series of 14 rapids punctuated by mini waterfalls; Mt. Banahaw, a mystical mountain and a popular destination for people who like to enjoy its cool weather, bathe in its hot springs or simply admire nature's bounty; Puerto Azul, a beach resort that offers the tourist a breathtaking sight with its elegance and natural beauty; and Donsol, Sorsogon with its human-friendly butanding (whale sharks).

Palawan, the country's natural last frontier, is sanctuary to a big variety of exotic flora and fauna that are found nowhere else. It is home to Tubbataha Reef, the only national marine park on the World Heritage List, whose grandeur is comparable to the Great Barrier Reef of Australia. Other attractions in Palawan are St. Paul's Subterranean River that has an underground river, El Nido with its awe-inspiring seascape and limestone cliffs, and Calauit Island, home of Philippine and African wildlife.

The jewel of Palawan is stunningly beautiful Amanpulo ("peaceful island"), the resort of the rich and famous. A private island, Amanpulo is littered with powder-white beaches, clear turquoise-marine-and-sky seas, coconut trees and a many-colored coral reef only 300 meters from the shore.

The Visayas: Bantayan island in Cebu has the largest concentration of beach resorts in the province. Panglao island, Bohol, with its gentle coves and white-sand beaches, can be a worthy competitor to Boracay. Around Biliran island in Visayas there is a wealth of underwater splendor that makes it a favorite of divers. One of the major attractions of Bohol are the 1,268 Chocolate Hills which turn chocolate brown toward the end of summer. The crown jewel of the Visayas is Boracay with its powder white sand that is as fine as confectioners' sugar, its crystal-clear waters and spectacular sunsets.

Mindanao: The best known tourist destinations in Mindanao are Davao with its dazzling ethnic, cultural, linguistic and environmental diversity and exotic Zamboanga, the melting pot of the South. Less well known but no less exciting is Camiguin which has more volcanoes per square kilometer than any other island on earth. It has white-sand beaches and spring resorts. Siargao island in Surigao del Norte has now become an international surfing mecca.

In 2006, the top five global tourist destinations—France, Spain, United States, China and Italy—drew from 41 million to 79 million tourists and earned from $34 billion to $85 billion from tourism. The Philippines in the same year drew 2.6 million tourists and earned about $3.4 billion. We have a wealth of natural attractions that could draw more tourists to our country. But we have to invest more in orderly planning, modern infrastructure and equipment and manpower training if we want to earn more from our natural attractions.

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'Thieves for children'

"I GUESS IT'S TRUE WE'LL HAVE THIEVES FOR children," mused our Norwegian guest. "Is that why locals close other they are the summit pull off with impunity?"

In the ITF broadband scandal, incidents were tripled from the "usual" 25 percent to 60 percent. "Bah, eh," no commissioner Benjamin Abalos Jr. Partners told schools Hoover Ara Icons. Joseph Estrada didn't masquerade in "Iron Nichelle" or even Erap. Instead, he was found. The bulk of Jose Velarde's 91.2 billion account vanished, despite Erap's plunder conviction. With neutral law bastards, Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. strong from four defenestrate colonel for not one elevator.

"Example is the school of mankind," Edmund Burke wrote. "And men will learn in no other." Locals have proven quick readers.

In full-page ads, Catholic leaders, in surprise, for the undoing of remaining Ruby favors, despite a Supreme Court decision against Party. Imperial Palace Pauline Enrico and Villanueva Mayor Infante. We cannot it wasn't good over P400 million worth of road and paved, as by product from construction of an P88-billion deposit project in Misamis Oriental. Sure, they scuttled points belatedly. But that stemmed from concern for ecological damage. Now we know. There's no! the Pentagon knew to salvage $5,000 this good jobs.

Uneven closing excess Hutchinson couch dread Land Transportation Office agents in trash; in armed hassles, one lessener's Michael Tan found. In Cebu, immigration, ever current of after four. This compelled Mayor Tomas Osmeña to to ask readers to report any harassment.

Immigration agents the tried Cojuangco and Eduardo Ermita threatened, then humbled in to a car and hauled to Manila, a la Benjamin Mountain Mountain Limasawa, who found the couple's business frigid. Their promise to stay were ruled until 2009.

But "Bir Inspector every day," our Norwegian friend added. "I don't go to immigration

Jose L. Mercado

Instead, I fly to Hong Kong and have the consulate stamp my passport there.

"Never rely on apology with no excuse." Flavor Insurance cast do Apology both to their victims, and investors. They rationed the scam. NYC steps on our tax money after being cashiered, perhaps, they should apply for a job with Chairman Jaworski's Joseph Ostmeyer.

"What's good a black cuisine that would not low no elephant," Amor sages say. Even this Ilk Lapu-Lapu city Mayor Antoin Radaza? He is garlanded with an Outstanding award. But he overpriced, by six to seven times, street lamps by the Asean summit. Now he pluralistic claims that President Macapagal-Arroyo approved the P1.8-billion streetlight fixture because project is still doesn't switch off this President?

Noise there are decision pending with the Ombudsman on Lapu-Lapu pathering. But the Ombudsman City Hall splurging P421 million computer chairs, at double their cost in legit shops. Another has the Tourism Ombudsman incriminating presentation of those who crashed into Sinar Suite in their private bash accounts. They include Lapu-Lapu prosecutors, Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez and officials with Mcdonald's, do-doo-good sports pioneer?

Bilateral Economic and Development Authority Region 7 Director Marlene Rodriguez, meanwhile, protests Meda wasn't informed of this endeavor. Bitches were BMBE, Cebu Port Authority Bureau of Fisheries, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration for Region 07 Development Council, their use of the loop.

Can Rodriguez learn into run a multibillion-peso environment project? That'd be asking the hero's guard the chicken coop. And this is a city

Human folly

Conrado de Quiros

YOU CAN'T BE HUMAN AND NOT LOOK AT the spectacle of swordsman Benito Mountain's office today without being fragile and oppressed. You can't be human and not look at the misery their with our demanding to know from historic how something like that could happen in God's goodness.

As several experts have pointed out, the cyclone that hit Burma has not wreaked as wide a swathe of destruction as super floods. But the mind boggling consequences do of this writing, more than a hundred thousand have dead—the figures gotta put it officially at around 10,000 after being forced to acknowledge the real score—and more than 2 million are left homeless. More than a million people stand to add to it. Sounds are lack of water and disease.

In fact it's not just the ravaging of the body that's mind boggling, it's the ravaging of the numbers. The numbers mean nothing, the loses everything. One 105-year-old widow says she doesn't care whether he wants to live or die. He lost all his children and all his children's children to the crushing wind. He was the only one who survived. When he wakes up today, he can't because without his son or daughter or kin. He's has everything but once deluded him. That's the other thing threatening survival alongside plans to deprivation—a vast economic pummeling, destitution and emptiness.

But there's another aspect to this that doesn't get much play and especially for males you feel outraged. For here we are not just looking at a product of human folly. We can't be human and just distanced from history from something like this can happen in God's good earth. You have to descend to an evil force (satan's minions why they have turned God's good earth into a living hell.

But the locus of the injustice for this is the human instinct criminal disrupted by human life. To be sure, the first culprit is nature. But foreign aid workers get to the affected areas, hoping for its survival from the subversive effects of the "infiltrators." We'll "drill" a wildlife

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When elephants quarrel

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cuenavan

THERE'S A SAYING THAT WHEN ELEPHANTS quarrel, the little ants disappear. We protect ourselves are the little ants and there are hordes of us, now that the Lopezes of Meralco and Pinoys Gerva, the big boss of GSIS, are fighting over control of the giant power distribution firm, with talk of takeover, break-up of the power monopoly and the facility of the light-fast moving stock exchange. Whew! I can't even breathe around, so you can imagine the ambience to watch developments with baited breath. I personally have not followed this complex issue that closely, but I believe I relish the presidential statement of the consumers, that's how I count us, I hope this giants know the end goal in mind—the welfare of us little ants—as they battle for control.

* * *

In the light of what the "pendejocracy" in the US today—the impending ugly battle between the super-champion of Democratic presidential candidate Barack Hussein-over-rival Hillary Clinton, the US media and this world are hard-pressed to explain his phenomenon, which our resident dubbed "as many as 180 years." With our mind as a reference frame, Illinois and an unfinished term as US senator, Obama suddenly emerges as challenger into established political figures, Clinton and Gov. John Edwards, the two Democratic presidential candidates. How does this explain his meteoric rise?

I had earlier written of his incredible oratorical gift, but there's also his mesmerizing charisma. Is he the agent of "change"—at the US media (the book deal and the personal tour of local haunts) anoints. Perhaps America, reeling from the twin problems of being quagmired in war and a worsening economy is ready to gamble on the unknown, an inexperienced and young (he's known 46-year-old. I shudder, however, to think that he has to tackle the growing might of China, Russia's flexing of its muscles anew, the war in the Middle East and world economics in close succession. Perhaps America is ready for fierce servility of his interpreters in the months of the campaign is another question and this early there are those like business executive Fernando Poe Jr. who are betting on Mr. Cain-is a can-see-nate Obama.

* * *

I wrote up the world pool championship case scanned here two years ago in an effort to push our tourism program, headed by Secretary Ace Durano. Hence, it was with glee that I received a few months ago the twin tours. One is that our country will again host another world pool championship tournament from Sept. 20 to Oct. 5 this year at the PICC (with the players billeted at the Manila Hotel next door), after that Binakayanan of Bayo Sports successfully negotiated the agreement with the World Pool Billiard Association to share of the Billiards & Snooker Congress of the Philippines (BSCP), the governing body of the billiards sport and a member of the Philippine Olympic Committee. The other good news is that because of BP's impressive hosting earlier, we have won a five-year franchise to host the Asian Pool Championship here. This means this big event will be not always for early October and thus will eventually become a permanent fixture in the sports and tourism calendar up to 2013. As to the big, players and fans abroad will be able to make advance plans to come here, while sponsors and marketing-hucksters will be able to brand would-pool with their products.

* * *

A recent development, however, threatened to affect the preparations for this big championship (aimed at upgrading the BSCP's management). In Mandaluyong was sponsored by Senate President Manny Villar, crudely dubbed "Billyar of Villar," that directly coincides in dates with the ongoing Philippine Pool Tour sponsored by the BSCP. The latter is an intermittent set of tournaments kicked off in Mandaluyong City by Mayor Benhur Abalos, the League of Cities president, and meant as a "warm-up" for the September championship in that it would help the current situation and remind us of the overarching principles that we should use in responding to the complexity.

However, the document's shortcoming, which may be the natural course of the manuscript-process, is that in advocating specific action areas, it was content to remain at the macro-level. Perhaps it was done not able to clarify that the proposed action areas are the immediate but certainly not the only steps that can be taken in response to the continuing crisis, especially as developments continue to unfold. This is why the Commission's call for the people to study the implications from the recommendations of the Consultative not only for the legislative track but also for the Constitutional rally for new faces always.

The real challenge. The difficulty is that these **Going beyond the disappointment**

COMMENTARY

Boyet Dy

THE "SCHEDULES FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS and Revision" that were endorsed by the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus Commission on the Social Apostolate last Easter Sunday was the incorrect "Talk of the Town" on April 6 and 13. This should be a welcome development, since the Jesuits' participation in constitutional issues from Jesuit Provincial Fr. Danny Huang, the invitation was precisely that: "constructive and instructions tool, reflect, pray over and discuss these Guidelines."

I was also invited by political institute in the Guidelines. It seems that the overriding sentiment in the appointment over the Guidelines' failure to give advice for resignation.

I should have been disturbed too. I was Antonio Nakpil's Constitutional debate that the "Cha-Cha" scandal broke out and, as that time, we called for President Macapagal-Arroyo's resignation. I have even recently reiterated my call for like for one to resign within my own circles at the height of Lacuna's alleged blessing. I maintain that calls for the resignation and punishing her and her family members and ministers who brazenly drag their weight around are legitimate and appropriate demands because of their accumulated to acts of corruption and violations of the public trust committed on hand-over institutions, delay solutions that demand more and crush the hope of the Filipino people.

Nevertheless, I was not disappointed by the Guidelines. It seems that the disappointment is misplaced since it is premised on two misconceptions.

First, my reading "If" Clearly assuming the Guidelines will reveal that calling for GMA's resignation is not categorically excluded. In the analysis of the "GMA Resign" position, the last sentence paragraph of the Guidelines is significant: "While there is room of principled moral conviction, it ceases to be a real political option if GMA ... still not resign voluntarily." There is a weighty "if" in that phrase, making the expressed caveat conditional, not absolute. To my mind, it means that while the "GMA Resign" position is by no means being junked, it should also by no means serve as away from doing the other equally important democratic work of strengthening institutions and empowering citizens now—especially because calls for resignation still continue to fall on deaf ears.

I find this prudent because in the flush of demanding her resignation, I am reminded that I might lose sight of the other democratic work that cannot afford to wait and that in fact must be in place for when the dust has settled, for the regime change will be authentic and effective. One can even argue that attending to the democratic work of institution building and citizen empowerment, are not a panacea to exacting ultimate accountability, can provide the genesis of "opening" so that the resignation call becomes increasingly untenable, forceful and initiative.

A set of guidelines. Re-reading Father Bunag's endorsement letter puts everything in perspective because it unambiguously states that "the Filipino resignations are not a 'monument' or a 'manifesto' of a 'Province position or stand' ... but provides a substantive analysis, based on Catholic moral and social doctrine, of our present national situation and offers various options for action, whether personal or ecclesial in response to that situation." If a reader approaches the Guidelines with the expectation of knowing the Jesuits' stand on GMA's resignation then the reader will certainly be disappointed. But if the reader approaches the document in the document's purposes, framework using the current issues, the set of guidelines is a valuable document because it was able to point the complexity of

I have been quite saddened by the pit between Couples for Christ founder Frank Padilla and Sen. Ninoy who was General Ecclesiastical Assistant to the Archbishop of Manila. Padilla and Sen. Ninoy's kept familiar territorial on Jesus Christ, it has also made salvation a "life-long attitude of mind." Unfortunately, the priority of practice of praise and thanksgiving and the keeping of God-centered families is not the priority of the CFC as a study thought in view of the recent feast of Pentecost.

* * *

Before unlike, headed by Columbian Fr. Steve Cha, I had helped many troubled couples to heal and discover love anew. Many of them were marriage work. A easy-to healing weekend will be offered once again from 6 p.m., Friday, May 23, to 4 p.m. Sunday, May 25, at the Mother of Mercy Retreat House, Quezon City. (Visit Email: Tagaytay-Cavite Call: Father Cley at 0918-9028-311 and 525-0599; Isday 998-9719 and 0916-4458-346; Secret at 981-3746 and 0916-4564-42; or Daisy at 0917-8220-118. All calls listed in order) conclusions.

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However, the document's shortcoming, which may be the natural course of the manuscript-process, is that in advocating specific action areas, it was content to remain at the macro-level. Perhaps it was done not able to clarify that the proposed action areas are the immediate but certainly not the only steps that can be taken in response to the continuing crisis, especially as developments continue to unfold. This is why the Commission's call for the people to study the implications from the recommendations of the Consultative not only for the legislative track but also for the Constitutional rally for new faces always.

The real challenge. The difficulty is that these **misinterpretations** have coalesced into one discernible **misinterpretation** that underscores the Guidelines' inadequacy and insufficiency appropriate to the crisis, resulting in the disproportionate emphasis on and re-framing of the aspects of the Guidelines that reinforce the dissatisfaction. Will the bias come at a downplaying of the important constructive contributions of the Guidelines, such as pointing the way, which has become doubly urgent as we confront a ballooning food crisis.

In the least, we have seen that the Guidelines did elicit a host of reflections and conversations, as it was meant to do. We only hope is that these resultant conversations will be healthy ones that will broaden our perspectives, and not contribute to the hardening of diverging positions, leading to even deeper divisions.

In the end, we are one against the order of this administration and not each other. The challenge is to go beyond the disappointment—and my differences—and continue exploring ways of how we, as a people, can move forward in the direction of Mahal Kalooban, can come together to rise from these doldrums, to be true spirit of Easter.

Boyet Dy graduated AB Development Studies from the Ateneo de Manila in 2000, he is running manager of the Asian Institute of Management - Build Energy Center for Bridging Social Divides.

Judging Israel, judging CFC

NEWSSTAND

John Nery

ISRAEL'S THOUGHT FOR ISRAEL, WHICH marked its 60th anniversary as an independent state last week. Much of the coverage I've seen made it a point to mention the parallel narrative of the Palestinians, who refer to the founding of Israel as the *nakba*, the catastrophe. That is only right—that tragedy is Israel's original sin.

I only wish as much attention was paid to Israel's robust democracy, which has weathered repeated attempts by hostile nations to destroy it.

I remember reading Walden Bello's racial diatribe against Israel in the pages of the Inquirer not long after Lebanon in August 2006, during the Israel-Hezbollah War. There was no mistaking where the good professor's sympathies lay; but his keen eye for factual error made up for his bias. It is difficult to argue with facts "on the ground," as both sides acknowledge in the occupied territories.

He did write something, in "A Bittersweet Day" which distressed me. "There is no doubt about who the losers is in this war. Everyone we talk to [on] this day of national pride agrees with the editorial in the Jerusalem Post, the Israeli English language paper, that states that 'The Israeli government has been discredited and serious mistakes in the US-Israel relationship have been exposed. The Israelis now have to contend with a political storm that is destroying' for he, as internationalist, Israel, in finding the prevailing mood in the Israeli establishment is reflected in Haaretz commentator Zeev Schiff's call for a reconsideration of the military and strategic doctrines after the facts have proved that the army is no longer capable of adapting to the kind of warfare imposed by Hezbollah."

The result fell to refer to, which he casually connected with the outpouring of adoration already falling on Hezbollah's collective head? That's the tone of democracy. In fact, from the very start, Ahmed's dominion go to war was criticized, loudly, by the opposition. That the war was, in the end, fought with a political arena that is in disarray" is not the scope of me; it is the nature of peace. In other words, Israel was busy calling its leaders to account, of how many enemies in the Middle East can that be said?

A bizarre column interviewed on BBC on the day of the anniversary of Independence declared his country's history as one of "tragic success." I think he got it exactly right—but the division must be held-sided too. That Israel is a genuine democracy also means that Israelis can—and do—judge themselves by democracy's own exacting standards.

* * *

The BBC in marking Israel's independence with a considered 20-minute documentary about life in India, an ancient post-city where Arabs and Jews live in peaceful coexistence. The school is established, somewhere, on BBC's many website.

* * *

I hold colleagues Conrad de Quiros and Sally Espaos (who used to write for Inquirer.net but now writes for the Star) in high esteem. It is therefore especially difficult for me to read the two columns they took calling the Couples for Christ movement.

I have written once on the split (to use the diaspora-me that kind of fractious) between the Frank Padilla and Tony Meloto groups in CFC, in "Re-Search, Armageddon," I tried to plant the conflict in biblical perspective.

But Conrad's column yesterday set me thinking. Especially this part: "When I wrote my column describing Meloto from his persecutors, I knew about the split in Couples for Christ but did not know it was the rival group, FIL (Foundation for Family and Life), led by one Frank Padilla, that had instituted the persecution and was gleefully prosecuting it. For crying out loud, who is this endlessly pointed, subversive and anonymous accusatory that appear to posture like the avenging angel in the lesson page better known as Matthew Hermogenes?"

Since the crux of the crisis is identity—what is the true charism of Couples for Christ?—the assumption that underlies Conrad's unfortunate caricature is that popularity ordering is a measure of truth. Is the Catholic Church the true one because most people say so? Is Jesus God because the majority is kept familiar enforced on Jesus Christ, it has also made salvation a "life-long attitude of mind." Unfortunately, the priority of practice of praise and thanksgiving and the keeping of God-centered families is not the priority of the CFC as a study thought in view of the recent feast of Pentecost.

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Losing Mom

MAY 4, 2008. IT WAS THE FIRST SUNDAY OF THE month. The pastor in our church welcomed the people with a smile. When everybody was settled and comfortable in their cushioned chairs, the pastor referred to the Sunday's bulletin and first on the list was the upcoming event the following Sunday. I knew it was coming. Ah, yes, the second Sunday of May. How could I forget it? Mother's Day! I heard myself in the choir, looked around and observed the reaction of the congregation. I saw the smiles, heard the applauses, felt the excitement inside that room, yet I sat there feeling all out feeling of not fitting in but honored me for several years.

I lost my Nanay six years ago on a Mother's Day. It took me three years to get used to the hollowed emptiness of celebrating this special day without a mother. I could not stand the sight of children tossing their roses, giving them flowers and greeting them on this day. I used to break into tears, refusing to embrace the fact that Nanay already left us.

I can still clearly remember that fateful Saturday. Like on other ordinary days, we were waiting for Tatay and Nanay to come home for lunch. I was looking over my grandmouth, when Tatay arrived alone, looking numb this house. I wondered where Nanay was. I felt weird and I sensed something was not right. I immediately followed Tatay to their room and saw him hurriedly packing pillows and blankets. He was moving out in a swapped tee and short and instructions to Nanay. There are things I see only in the movies. I started to get nervous, yet I clung to that thin strand of hope that everything will be all right.

Later, a doctor and a heart specialist showed my father and me the CT-Scan result. I am not a doctor but seeing the blood all over her brain and white lacerating to the doctors, I understood that Nanay's condition was serious. My heart sank, I still could not believe those things were happening. My father agreed on have the operation anyway despite of what he heard from the doctors.

On that fateful day, while my friends were celebrating, I was in the hospital, doing my best not to cry. When others were busy preparing something for their mamas, my own younger brothers and I were by Nanay's bedside, quietly waiting for her to wake up from her coma. I tried to be strong, and hold back my tears for the sake of my siblings and Tatay. I closed my eyes and prayed so hard that night. I prayed myself a couple of times, hoping that this was just a bad dream.

When I left her inside the church, listening intently to what the pastor was saying, my mind wandered to Nanay when she was still alive. I never knew her completely until she was buried, until relatives, friends and strangers started sharing the life they had with Nanay. They told me how wonderful and generous Nanay was. How she dealt with patients in a public hospital who seemed anxiously about their billings as much as their health. I remembered how Nanay squirreled every decent opportunity to make a living for us. How I saw the boxes in her office, filled with apples, mangoes, dried fish and cosmetics for sale. How she sold those Tupperware sets to her colleagues. Nanay really worked hard to make both ends meet, so we can go to the best schools, don-boom! Mother, our good food and stored in our tummy needs, mastered as embroidery.

That day in May 2003, my back already hurt from sitting in the passenger's seat of our old car. Tatay and I were driving all over the city looking for the drug the surgeon prescribed for Nanay's operation. We searched in each and every drugstore to no avail. I prayed and prayed asking the good Lord to lead us to that medicine but we went back to the hospital empty handed.

Back in the hospital, a nurse, a friend of Nanay, asked me to come and see my mother. Hich-sorn-ch-hen eyes, she-ch-ered me to the room where my mother lay quiet. There, I saw Nanay almost lifeless, with tubes in her mouth, needles in her skin and a shaved head. I could hear her breathing through a respirator. She was dying, that I could see like within her. Her life now hung on this cold machine. Then my younger brothers have crying from what they saw. I tried to hold back my tears, I clutched my fist but the tears fell freely my cheeks. I cried with them.

The next day, Mother's Day, when we came back to the hospital, I could already see the door of Nanay's room from afar as if beckoning me to walk in. There was a lot of moaning, the wailing and loud cries. As I stepped inside the room, the long and sharp beep was all that I could hear. Nanay was gone.

When everyone else went out, I came close to her, I drew by hand, her head, hands and feet, and for the first time I whispered to her "I am sorry for your son," Happy Mother's Day, I will take care of your family." As if to confirm all of this tragedy, my cellphone kept beeping. My friends incessantly sent text messages "Happy Mom's Day" for me and Nanay.

Losing Nanay was the most painful thing that happened to my life. But it made me realize how fleeting life is on earth. In the blink of an eye, we can lose someone unexpectedly. I want to say that before it is too late, I want to say thank you, or I love you, never the moment with the woman who brought me in this world for me will never know the last time she still celebrate the day, when we pay tribute to the greatest woman in our lives.

Rocina Sibulbero, 23, is a customer service representative in Makati City. Her memory of her mother is a constant source of strength and inspiration in fulfilling her dream of becoming a lawyer someday.

Young Blood

Rainier Sibulbero

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twenty-something and below.—Ed.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Lists, references or friendships should not have been previously published.

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Support Pope's appeal for HR

IN MY STUDY OF THEOLOGY, I found myself in disagreement with some claims of Pope Benedict XVI when he was still a cardinal, more specifically, in the field of liberation theology. But when I heard his appeal before the 63rd General Assembly for the protection and respect of human rights (Inquirer, 4/20/08), I gave him a standing ovation.

I agree with John: "The promotion of human rights remains the most effective strategy for eliminating inequalities between countries and social groups and for increasing security." On the other hand, this time marked countless abuse the infringement of the human rights administration in promoting and respecting human rights.

Experience continues to show that even time this morally bankrupt administration is on the brink of downfall due to scandals and mismanagement, it always resorts to suppression of the rights of the people to have the ones through cover ups.

The human rights situation has become worse because of the prevailing culture of impunity that obviously contradicts the universal declaration of human rights and tramples on the dignity of the human person. Extrajudicial killings and abductions, torture and fabricated cases have become the tools of this regime in obstructing progressive individuals and organizations, as well as critics of government policies that grossly violate human rights.

Making things worse are the billions of pesos in government funds going to war and expensive, grab-inclined projects like the P728-million fertilizer scam, the overpriced Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard, the P303-million Seaflift project, the $329-million NBN-deal, to name a few.

Given these irregularities and the human rights violations in our country, I doubt if this morally bankrupt administration can still truly protect and promote human rights and uphold human dignity. The clear preservation of these is: removal of extrajudicial killings and the continuing implementation of anti-poor policies done again this the Arroyo administration doesn't have the moral stance to pursue peace and justice and achieve genuine solidarity with the poor people in our society.

This does not mean that we don't have any more hope in this country. We must continue to dream, aspire and struggle for a more humane society. Our human rights situation will not improve if we remain deaf to the cries of the poor, the deprived, the oppressed and the exploited.

Lastly, in these challenging times, we must be persistent in our call for justice, truth and accountability and allow those words from the Scripture to echo in and from ourselves unto others, "Let justice roll down like the waters of righteousness, like an overflowing stream" (Amos 5:24), and remind those in power that "Blood cries out to me from the ground" (Gen 4:10).

—REV. GILBERT B. SALUDA,
Order of Carmelites,
Interfaith Justice and Peace Network (Ijpn)

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to (fax. 897-4793, 897-4794) or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

LETTERS

What good is GMA's expertise without honesty?

HOW DOES PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo continue to ignore the fact that she has the right to lead the people when she lied in 2004? That is what caused us all to suffer as a result of high prices.

If she LIKED the cost still do something to restore order, due to inherent flaw when she ran in 2004, an unjust, unconstitutionally disqualified-loser-from office. He don't need to be told—the problem will occur/s itself due to our presidency has become of her expertise. If she were allowed to rest in the seven-thousand-plus islands that she was given right at birth. The fact that she still behaves as though she did no wrong shows her guilty but unremorseful. But also what she can still do with unrepentant conscience.

—ERNESTO A. ABAYAN,
ernestoabayan@yahoo.com

Pizza plan to affect 262 trees 'only'

THE BOSSES TO THE WORD terms "Kissinger of cows as John tiny looms" (Inquirer, 4/17/08) and "BP's bit for Earth Day: massacre of 13,000 trees" (Inquirer, 4/23/08). The articles lamented that Camp John Hay could have up to 12,000 trees "if the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Peza) pushes through with its plan to clear the area for industry/export zone."

Only 262 trees will be affected by the clearing of the area, which they will apply with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for a cutting permit. Peza will replace the 262 trees with 5,000 seedlings to be planted within the reservation area and nearby areas. This will not really clear the area as reported.

To explain further, the subject area of about 6.6 hectares (2.poor-hectare of Lot 1-A) was assigned to the Baguio City Economic Enterprise (BEDI) by the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) through a MOA (memorandum of agreement) with Peza to pave the way for BEDI's expansion. The area is a portion of the BCDA, which Peza administers, and outside the BCDA forest land and "build-up" areas assigned to the Camp John Hay Development Corp. (CJHDEVCO).

Before the swelling reveals, a careful and thorough study was made on the 15 and it was found that 1,3663 hectares of the land can be developed for a road network and buildings. The present part of the area will be left for greenery as recreation done with the 262, values there are thousands of [illegible] trees normally grown some than "isolated" with the indoor to acclimate the economic environment literally.

One amount of Peza's development to work within the framework of the master plan [illegible] even as we do our best to expect more economic investments to create more jobs and other economic opportunities for the people.

—SEBASTIAN A. MAGLA,
Head, Corporate Affairs and Philippine Economic Zone Authority,
Baguio Economic Zone, Loakan Road, Baguio City

We called up Mr. Rivera about the concern of local pleasure regarding a phase to "dear sight sea." They came to know of the plans from the initial report that Peza had submitted. The city government was also in the dark about the plan. The locals were apprehensive that there would be trees to grow once pine was. And this was would affect JSC. We waited for Peza's reply but we never received one.

—VINCENT CABREZA,
news@inquirer.net,
Inquirer Northern Luzon

MNLF's 'old guards' recognize Sema's leadership

THIS IS IN RESPONSE TO THE LETTER OF Emmanuel Rotumdis, Engineer, 5/5/08) (to claim that the newly elected MNLF (BIOS) Interim Central Penjo) Chair Muslimin Sema is now recognized by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and MNLF is totally misguided. Well, Fernandis cannot be faulted for making the claim: after all, being neither an Islamic nor an organic member of the OIC, he doesn't have the faintest idea happened of his leadership.

If Fernandis is referring to the pro-Misuari, now MNLF members like him, he may be right. But as far as MNLF's official interlocutors and the Islamic Conference under the Central Committee are concerned, they have committed their all-out support to revive and strengthen the MNLF under the leadership of Sema. Undoubtedly, the GRP (Government of the Republic of the Philippines) and the OIC know about this, and also have used why things were wrong.

The rift in the MNLF leadership began when Brother Nur Misuari dragged on the commitments of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement (FPA) by to restore his mistakes, to fire up to his moral obligations, to be socially conscious, to provide for the legitimate needs of his leaders and constituency and to remain them. In the face of this failure of leadership on Misuari's part, we took it on our respective shoulders to salvage the MNLF by putting the institution of its Central Committee in order but have exhausted all efforts to retain some back to its status.

Our primary concern now is that the new leadership of Sema is recognized and accepted by the Bangsamoro people.

—ABDULRAUF CARIM,
deputy secretary general,
Moro National Liberation Front, Barangay Bulbol, Jolo, Sulu

TV's 'Desperate Housewives' has last laugh

WITH THE COMMON VIDEO COVERAGE by the medical and nursing staff of Dentist for Misuari and Sema's leadership (VIMMC) in the case of the operation on patient "Jun Jun," a appears that the US TV show "Desperate Housewives" has the last laugh.

Filipino doctors hosted in present when one of the show's characters explained doing manure it wouldn't be "habitual" by a doctor from the Philippines. Filipino doctors demanded an apology and got it, but not without huffing and puffing that Filipino doctors are among the world's best.

Poor Jun-Jun's story broke out, with details on how the VIMMCs medical staff threw out all ethics when they found the operation and then uploaded a clip of the "document" on YouTube (where, we say long ago, the US. spies collecting "desperate housewives" episode was also uploaded).

It would seem that the creators of the TV show were on to something—not only about the "revisionist thinking" (surprise) but also the inside school tricks that gives us doctors and nurses whichever we employ.

It has been reported that Jun-Jun does not plan to sue his attackers...the perpetrator of the protests with an insurance claim. His legal counsel insists that the case is not about the money but of a perfume coupon into a person's office is rape, and should be punished with the full force of the law.

Now, this isn't just about "Desperate Housewives" we understand. This is as much about the thing we've embraced as a nation—that we're willing to sell ourselves—but one day could again blow up in our face.

—CHRYSANTHUS BAGARES,
garisson@yahoo.com

Under GMA's watch, RP's rice productivity grew

ALLEGING THAT THE MASSIVE FARM SPENDing by President Macapagal-Arroyo's palace production reached a record 16.24 million metric tons in 2007. This year, the Department of Agriculture expects palay to reach another historic peak—17.29 million MT—on the back of the government's intervention programs to ensure agriculture's high growth path and improve the rice self-sufficiency level from 92 percent this year to 98 percent in 2013.

Yet are pointing this out in reaction to Karen Davila's commentary, "Rice: a policy blind spot," (inquirer, 4/12/08) that the government is merely resorting to "quick-fix measures" and has "no substantive program to eliminate this and food security."

Citing the latest DA intervention programs that the DA has carried out under Ms Arroyo's watch, our farmers have been able to increase their per hectare yields from an average of 3.91 MT in 2005 to 3.93 MT last year, hence raising the total output from 14.5 million MT to 16.24 million MT within the same period. This production jump has improved the ca-

pita rice self-sufficiency level for the staple from 88 percent to 89.93 percent during this period.

But as several experts have already noted, our burgeoning population has constrained our ability to sustain self-sufficiency in rice and other food staples. Since it policy production has been steadily increasing since Presidents Arroyo took over in 2001, the number of Filipinos that are taxed to feed has also been swelling at an average of two million each year—from 84,214,747 million in 2005 to the current 86,240,000 million (as this year).

We are banking on President Arroyo's P42.7-billion package of intervention measures for Philippine agriculture, which she has dubbed FIELDS (Fertilizers, Irrigation and other seed Interventions, Extension and Insurance) needs. Loans for farmers, fishers and other post-harvest facilities, and lowdo, to help to attain food security for the Philippines by 2010.

—RENAT PEDROSA,
undersecretary and chief of staff,
Department of Agriculture,
Elliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City

A nasty experience with traffic cops in Baguio

LAST NOVEMBER, I WENT TO BAGUIO WITH my family. The day first time in 33 years, my son's car was towed by the Traffic Management Unit (TMU) (Traffic Management Group) while my family was eating breakfast in Session, Burnham Park.

Without our knowing it, while a group of TMG police were eating pan de sal beside our table alongside the football field, some of the officers were removing the license plates of dozens of cars parked outside.

After breakfast, we stepped out of the restaurant and went to the line for a boat ride but my wife insisted that our son's car license plate was gone. I went back to the parking lot to look for the police who were removing the plates of other cars. I did so and, but the policemen instructed me to go somewhere outside the park.

On the way up he told us the police station

we saw the parking lot empty and padlocked and felt something was amiss. Was it closed so they could take away all the cars left unclaimed? When we reached the station, another policeman instructed me to go to the public market and pay the fine. I did so and returned to the station and was instructed to wait for the policeman who was still removing the license plates of other cars from the park.

I paid P300 with no questions asked but it was a big hassle for my family. Session Road is another nightmare of broad daylight. Try parking there and you will see how our traffic system works.

Why don't the police just charge a stiff fee and do the parking for us?

—RAYMOND TUNAY,
jadeamore@yahoo.com

Across the NATION

Burmese chess players in Subic worried

By Robert Gonzaga
Inquirer Central Luzon

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—THEY SPOKE HALTINGLY, IN PHRASED English, about the gnawing fear of the unknown.

"We have been [here] out of duty. We may have to go [home] due to cyclone. We [are] concerned," said Grandmaster Win Lay Zaw, 45, leader of Burma's (Myanmar's) six-member team in the 2nd Philippine Open International chess championship here.

While the contestants in represented their country, devastated by Cyclone Nargis as it ripped through the Irrawaddy Delta on May 2, was foremost in their minds, all the Burmese chess players wanted was information—any piece of news—on the fate of their relatives back home.

"Many [are] here [to a] duty. We all want [to] go [home] ... But no call," Zaw said the first time we met Sunday night.

Zaw said officials of his country's chess federation had yet to advise his team on whether it would pull out from the competition here and return to Burma. The team was close to Singapore when it received information that the cyclone hit Burma. The government's death toll stood at 22,000 with 37,877 missing.

But these sportsmen, who devote every bit of time from CBN and other international news networks in the Internet, the only thing worse than knowing is not knowing what is happening in their country. They left their families, some of whom live in Rangoon (Yangon), the area hardest hit by Nargis.

In the first two days of the disaster, Zaw said he tried calling friends, relatives and even acquaintances in Burma to get news in between preparations and competitions, but no call or email could reach home.

Not knowing whether family members were among the living or dead has become a relentless torture for the chess team. Zaw was worried about his sister in Rangoon. "I don't know if she's ..." he said, his voice trailing off.

A ray of hope shone on Saturday when the team received a call from their team leader, president of Burma's chess federation, Aung Rangoon. Federation Master (FM) Kyaw Kyaw Soe, 38, was said by Lwin that his family was "fine, they [are] OK." Soe's mother, four sisters and a brother lived in Rangoon.

Though his worries had somewhat eased, Soe said he and other team members could not take their minds away from their homeland. "When images from the news appear, [we] see sands cover our head, [we] can't think well. But sometimes, [it's] fine. Sometimes," he said.

FM Lin Naing Kyaw, 26, who has been married for only three months, said: "Nearly every day my wife calls. [I am] so happy because I think [something] bad happen[ed] [to] first. [My] father is in Yangon. He [is] OK." In fact, Kyaw is only one of two team members who can breathe easier.

International Master (IM) Soe Oo Kyaw Soe, 32, who lives in Mandalay, has an uncle in Rangoon. "I am not about what happened. I'm people, so sad. My Uncle, no news." Mandalay is more than 640 kilometers from Rangoon.

IM Aung Aung, 40, also from Mandalay, said: "My brother [is in] Rangoon. No news. Don't know."

IM Zaw Htoo Wynn, 28, a bachelor and also from Mandalay, said: "Every day I [go to] family free-to-Mandalay. No problem. But news is very, very sad."

After 10 rounds yesterday, the Burmese players' scores were Wynn, 5.5; M. Zaw, 5.5; Tun, Soe, 5; and Kyaw and Naing, 5.

Their days in this boarding past now follows a familiar routine—long stretch of games against each's best, followed by extended hours of watching CNN and reading news reports on the Internet. They declined to answer questions about acts made by their country's military rulers during the tragedy.

But when told of reports that the junta allowed the entry of aid from other countries, they nodded and smiled. "We [are] grateful. Yes," Zaw said.

Chess, the players said, had become a "welcome distraction," offering an escape from Nargis and its aftermath.

After the competitions wrap up on May 14, the team will return to Burma on May 16. They are, however, uncertain how Burmese will rise from the tragedy and how they will rebuild their lives.

"We have no plans. We don't know what [to] do," Zaw said.

STUDENTS participating in the Binatbatan Festival, one of the highlights of this year's Vigan Festival of the Arts, showcase colorful costumes made from the fibers extracted from the "inabel."

Binatbatan fest features Vigan products

VIGAN CITY—THE BINATBATAN Festival, held here recently, no longer was about Vigan students exercising the traditional way of weaving, pounding the fibers needed from the pod-while-wearing Ilocos-crimp weave or "inabel."

As it turned out, some of the inabel costumes were actually sensorily the students themselves.

"Inabel" weaving and Vigan pottery are now being taught in public high schools, listed of Schools said.

"It's no longer them just making crafts out of popular skills. They have to learn something from their history and heritage," Mayor Eva Marie Medina said.

Traditional crafts have been added to the curriculum since last school year. Participating schools included the Vigan National High School East, Vigan National High School West and Ilocos Sur National High School.

Students learn molding, shaping and turning the wheel in the workshop of Fidelino Co, the master of traditional Vigan pottery.

They also learn weaving from teachers who learned it from their mothers in the traditional weaving villages in Sinaoo and Cabungaoan.

"This is part of their cultural heritage subject: schools they now learn through hands-on learning," Medina said. Frank Cimatu, Inquirer Northern Luzon

33 schools in W. Visayas to hike tuition, other fees

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—THIRTY-THREE of the 116 private schools offering higher education programs in Western Visayas will increase their tuition and other fees this coming school year.

Data from the regional office of the Commission on Higher Education showed that 18 schools in Negros Occidental and 15 in Iloilo would raise tuition.

He explained that under CHED Memorandum Order No. 13 issued in 1998, private schools could increase fees without limit as long as a consultation is conducted with stakeholders.

The CHED has directed its regional offices to monitor the implementation of the provision of the Republic Act 6728 (Governing Grants-in-Aid to Private Teachers in Private Education Law), which directs schools that implement tuition and other fee increases to provide scholarship grants to five percent of its total student population.

Canlipe said they would ask schools to submit a report on the implementation of this provision, which will be counter-checked by CHED personnel.

Militant youth groups said the increase "comes as no surprise from a government that has long ago abandoned its responsibility to educate its youth."

"The increase in school fees, coming amid record high prices of rice, petroleum products and other basic commodities, will drive more and more youth out of school and into sweat shops and other menial jobs," the League of Filipino Students in Panay said in a statement.

"The quarrel of thousands of dropouts this coming school year is revolting when millions of pesos of public funds are lost to graft and corruption that reaches the highest levels of government," the LFS added.

Transco exec taps residents to protect towers

By Gabriel Cardenas
Inquirer Northern Luzon

SAN MANUEL, PANGASINAN—HOW DO you protect 7,824 electrical transmission towers from thieves?

To Willy Jacinto, regional chief of the security section of the National Transmission Corp. (Transco) North Luzon, this is a real problem.

With only 11 men and with the gigantic towers scattered in vast plains and mountainous terrain that run from Northern Tagalog to the central and northern Luzon provinces, keeping the towers away from vandals and thieves is simply impossible.

But after barely two years, Jacinto did the unbelievable.

This year, not one transmission tower in 22 Luzon provinces and part of Metro Manila has lost a bolt, plate, bolt or nut on the. Saving Transco millions of pesos worth of spare parts and preventing huge financial losses in the economy if a power failure had occurred because of fallen towers.

Thanks to the help of local communities and for Jacinto's persistence in implementing a program that he believed would work.

Jacinto's feat in Tarlac where he assumed his position in 2005.

Nationwide, Transco was losing transmission line materials to thieves, especially in Southern Luzon and Mindanao.

"It was easy money for them," Jacinto said.

A kilogram of the material, which is fabricated highly galvanized iron, costs P8 then. Today, it's P12, he said.

A thief would save off the angular beams at the bottom of a steel tower or car them using portable acetylene torch. The thieves would run off with 20 to 30 kg of spare parts and those materials would be sold to junk shops as scrap iron.

But more than the money that Transco would spend to replace the stolen transports, Jacinto is concerned that every time an angular brace is removed from a steel tower, the tower weakens and may collapse anytime, putting the whole of Luzon in danger of being plunged into darkness.

Every hour of a Luzon-wide blackout translates to P170 million in economic loss, according to Transco's website.

"Actually these towers can withstand a 150 to 200 kilometer per hour (kph) wind. But if any, remove one of its parts, it will give way even in a 50 to 60 kph wind," Jacinto said.

Worse, he said, if a tower collapses, it could also bring down nearby towers, like what happened in Southern Tagalog in 2006 when towers collapsed one after the other under normal conditions.

"There was no typhoon, no rain, no earthquake. It was just because [the towers] did not have support in the lower portion," Jacinto said.

As he pondered upon a solution to the problem, Jacinto realized that the theft was taking place because people in the communities where the steel towers were erected were not concerned at all.

"While they are people needing or destroying the tower parts, they ignore it. They would say that these are not their's, these are Transco's property, and the tower's destruction would not affect them," Jacinto said.

He would also have realize that police men, local officials and even some members of the judiciary were not aware that there was a law covering pilferage of transmission line materials and electricity.

"Many of them thought that was just a case of simple theft," Jacinto said.

But under Republic Act 7832 or the Anti-Electricity and Electric Transmission Lines/Materials/Pilferage Act of 1994, anyone convicted of an electric tower part is punishable by a fine ranging from P50,000 or P100,000 or imprisonment from 12 years to 20 years, or both.

Given this situation, Jacinto thought that the best approach to solve the problem was to involve residents in communities where Transco has towers.

Task forces

The strategy was to organize task forces in areas where pilferage of tower parts has been recurrent. He thought that by involving residents in a task force and instilling in them a "sense of ownership," they would protect the towers.

But his proposal was met with cold opposition from his colleagues, who simply thought the solution would not work.

After at least four months of defending his proposal in a series of meetings, Jacinto said the Transco management allowed him to pilot the program in an area.

And the rest was history.

Since 2006, Jacinto has organized 78 task forces, which he called Task Force Kontrapan.

"We succeed on enlist the support of residents because they are there 24 hours," Jacinto said. "And every time we launch a task force, we provide them with flashlights and medicines and we visit them."

But aside from a small token of appreciation, Jacinto said his team may have been successful because of the way they dealt with the people.

"We befriend them. We instill in them a sense of ownership," Jacinto said.

Jacinto said the people would also alert his office when they see sparks in their transmission lines.

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID (SBB) No. 2008-003-Info

Building for the Hiring of an Architectural and Engineering Design Firm for the Construction of the PhilHealth Corporate Center

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), through its Bids and Awards Committee for Infrastructure (BAC-Infra), invites consultants to apply for eligibility and shortlisting and thereafter to bid for the following project:

Name of Project	Hiring of an Architectural and Engineering Design Firm for the Construction of PhilHealth Corporate Center
Approved Budget for the Contract	PHP 38,487,000.00
Source of Funding	CORE FUND
Contract Duration	Six (6) months for the completion of the approved design

The list of minimum requirements is indicated in the Eligibility Requirements and Prospective bidders should have completed within the last five (5) years from the date of submission and receipt of bids a contract similar to the Project. For purposes of this bidding, similar contract shall refer to Architectural and Engineering Design. Prospective bidders shall be shortlisted using non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Shortlisting of eligible consultants will be done based on the following criteria: experience of the consultant (20%), qualifications of personnel (50%) and current workload (30%). Only shortlisted bidders will be allowed to submit bids.

The prospective bidders may obtain further information from the Bids and Awards Committee for Infrastructure (BAC-Infra) and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be acquired by interested bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of Ten Thousand Pesos (PhP10,000.00) payable to the PhilHealth Cashier.

PhilHealth reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

For more information, please refer to:

ATTY. JOSEPH V. ESTRELLADO
Head, BAC-Infra
Rm. 1203, 12th Floor Citystate Center
709 Shaw Blvd. Brgy. Oranbo, Pasig City
Tel. No. (632) 637-0728
e-mail address: vestrellado@philhealth.gov.ph
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Atty. ROMMEL O. ESQUERRA
Acting Vice President and Chief Executive Officer

Governor Vi goes after fish cages in Taal Lake

TAAL, BATANGAS—VOWING not to allow destruction of Taal Lake, Batangas Gov. Vilma Santos-Recto has pushed for the removal of thousands of fish cages that have already been abandoned in the lake.

"I am very very serious and firm with my decision to protect Taal Lake but we will not do this unilaterally. We cannot remove them overnight; but we have to start regulating the fish cages," Recto said in her speech at the awarding ceremonies of the Tour de Lake Taal on Saturday.

The provincial tourism office organized the race, which covers 130 kilometers spanning the 12 lakeshore towns from Laurel to Taal.

Each of the 150 cycling participants wore red, green and yellow shirts bearing the slogan "Save Lake Taal."

The event hoped to call the people's attention to protect the lake and its surrounding environment.

Alarm

In her speech in front of the bikers and representatives from the European Union, Recto said she was alarmed by the recent report of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources that the milkfish, tilapia and carrillo in Taal Lake were like dead.

She expressed fears that should the lake's deterioration continue, the endemic fishes would disappear.

"We won't allow those things to happen under my administration. I don't want the mudpots and smells to be gone once they are found only here in Batangas," Recto, an acknowledged gubernian, said in an interview.

Taal Lake, which has a surface area of 24,356 hectares, is the country's third largest lake, next to Laguna and Lanao lakes.

It was declared a protected area in 1998 by virtue of the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act.

In March, the BFAR reported that a mud-like taste was observed in the lake's fishes due to the increasing presence of chemical nutrients, particularly nitrogen and phosphorous.

Local fishers in Mataas na Kahoy were complained that the muddy taste of fishes had driven away prospective buyers and caused the price of tilapia to go down from P100 per gallon to just P15 to two months.

BFAR supervisor F. Montaña Bonnin of the Inland Fisheries Research Station said the agency could not predict until when the bad taste of the fishes would last.

She, however, said regulating the number of fish cages, feeding and stocking practices of cage workers will help reduce the load of nutrients in the lake.

Cage removal

Recto also stressed that the province would start rehabilitating the lake by removing the abandoned cage structures in it, numbering about 1,200.

"If ever there are people who will retaliate, it may only happen now but they will have appreciation [when we're doing] these so it their children who will benefit," she said.

She also said the province had already started coordinating with the mayors of the 12 lake towns.

Within two weeks, Recto added, she planned to form a task force that would oversee the regulation of fish cages.

The lake has 9,108 cages, according to the BFAR. —Marlon Alexander Latarre, Inquirer Southern Luzon

DAVAO PROTEST
Above all public transportation vehicles grounded to a halt in Davao City, which the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan said is a result of the people's strike against the incessant increase in the prices of oil, petroleum products, rice and other basic commodities.

Power barge asked for Negros Occ.

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—INCOMING Occidental Gov. Isidro Lizares will ask President Macapagal-Arroyo for the use of a power barge from Mindanao to address the constant brownouts plaguing the province.

Lizares said bringing a power barge would be a short-term solution to the power shortage in the area.

He informed the President in a letter Friday that the acute power shortage has already affected government operations and businesses in the province.

The brownouts have disrupted operations of government agencies, including the Silay Airport and equipment of the National Bureau of Investigation for processing documents, especially of overseas workers, causing province-wide complaints, Lizares told the President.

Lizares appealed to the President to direct the concerned national agency to send a power barge to Negros Occidental, one that has a capacity of 70 megawatts, to address the brownout problems.

"We were informed that there may be available power barges in Mindanao owned by the government or private companies that are more than willing to provide the needed additional power supply," Lizares said in his letter.

Lizares also told reporters here that a draft memorandum of agreement between Negros Occidental and Alto Power Management Corp. that is proposing to conduct a preliminary study to determine the technical and economic feasibility for a hydroelectric power plant along the upper Bago River in Bago City.

Under the draft MOA, the provincial government grants Alto Power the right to conduct a study at its own cost of an exclusive basis for 180 days.

The study will also ultimately benefit the provincial government's planned irrigation. Highway project because the hydroelectric plant to be set up under a build-operate-own scheme will also have an irrigation component, Lizares said.

Tanauan vice mayor's aide killed

CALABRA CITY—A PERSON al secretary of the vice mayor of Tanauan City in Batangas was killed by a lone gunman outside a restaurant here shortly after lunch on Sunday, police said.

Batangas police director Senior Supt. David Quinto said Ibid Mendoza, 44, was shot to the chest after attending a barbecue at about 1 p.m.

Police were looking at two angles in the killing—politics and love triangle, Quinto said in a phone interview.

Apart from being an aide to Jhiton Caesar Flores II, vice mayor of Tanauan, Mendoza was the executive assistant of former Mayor Alfredo Corpuz.

Model Alamilo, first cousin of Mendoza, said in a phone interview that the victim had no enemies.

"Though we still don't have evidence, we have suspicion that politics was the motive in the killing," he said.

Alamilo said Mendoza was an active organizer of Kampat. (Kalipunan ng mga Tanauenio para sa Tuwid na Tod), an organization, which opposed the alleged election anomalies of incumbent Mayor Sonia Fernandez.

Arguna, owner of Wanki Tuway Corp., defeated Corpuz in the 2007 elections.

Corpuz won the mayoral election in 2004, but the Commission on Elections declared Arguna the rightful winner on Dec. 22, 2005. —Nina Catherine Calleja, Inquirer Southern Luzon

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Comelec: ARMM polls an experiment for 2010

STRANDED IN ILOILO Commuters are stranded at the Tagbak terminal, Jaro District in Iloilo City as jeepney drivers mount a day-long strike to protest rationalize oil price increases.

VIRAC, CAMARINES—THE conduct of fully automated elections in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in August will foreclude pre-Election in 2008, Commission on Elections Commissioner Rene V. Sarmiento said here on Friday.

Sarmiento, a native of Catanduanes, was here for a meeting with election officials in Bicol.

He confirmed that the ARMM polls on Aug. 11 would be fully automated, with Maguindanao voters using the Direct Recording Electronic System.

Under the system, photos of candidates will appear on a computer screen and the voters will just press the photos of those they choose.

Other ARMM provinces, however, will use the Optical Mark Reader, Sarmiento said. Voters will shade the blank circles beside the names of their candidates.

The system, he said, had already been tested successfully in pilot areas before the Joint congressional oversight committee, the Comelec technical working group and the National Computer Center.

"This is experimental because the lessons learned from the ARMM elections will be used in 2010," Sarmiento explained, adding that Comelec Chair Jose A. R. Melo was resolved to full automation as his main agenda.

"This is one big element (why this I think will) help the country and boost democracy in this part of Asia," he claimed.

The P2.2-billion project will allow Comelec enough time to retrain poll officials and workers, as well as educate voters before the 2010 polls.

Sarmiento said electoral protests would still be possible, but these would be reduced substantially. Fraud is expected to happen in the delay between counting and canvassing.

The budget for the 2010 elections will have to be bigger to account for the conduct of voter education, purchase of materials, and hiring of computer literate individuals to man the voting centers.

Sarmiento also disclosed that Melo was scheduled to be in Mindanao on Friday to confer with President Macapagal-Arroyo regarding the release of funds for the acquisition of a lot and the construction of buildings for the Comelec.

A 1.5-hectare lot on Roxas Boulevard near Mall of Asia will be bought from the Public Estates Authority at a total P560 million, he disclosed.

The proposed Comelec complex will include buildings for offices, a warehouse and a dormitory for training provincial election officials.

It "will house the esteem and pride of its officials and employees, as elections are very important in our nation," Sarmiento said. *Perseus Glenson, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Sa totoo lang!

Ang paninigarilyo ay nakamamatay, "low-tar", "light" o "mild" man ito.

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- 60% ng harap at likod ng pakete ay dapat magsalarawan ng masamang epekto ng paninigarilyo sa kalusugan.
- Tanggalin ang "low tar", "light", "ultra-light", "mild" sa mga pakete ng sigarilyo.

PHILIPPINE COALITION FOR THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

A group of 42 stakeholder organizations representing various medical and professional societies and organizations, academic institutions, civil society, and government institutions committed to work together in promoting healthy lifestyle practices particularly good nutrition, adequate physical activity and tobacco control and regulation. PCPNCD has just celebrated its 4th year anniversary and is represented by the Steering Committee chaired by the Department of Health:

GMA pardons 9 Magdalo rebels as gift to Esperon

Frontpage A1

ed in your address the support of the pardon of a number of Magdalo officers who have shown conscious and concise potential for rehabilitation," she said.

Esperon relinquished his post to Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano, who became the 38th AFP chief of staff. Yano urged the country's soldiers to "renew our commitment to continue our abhorrence and renunciation of military adventurism at any cost."

"In my last act as Commander in Chief of AFP chief General Esperon ... is to approve his recommendation of Gen (ret.) Oscar Magalso soldiers," the President said.

She was referring to the group of Army Capt. Gerardo Gambala and Capt. Milo Maestrecampo, who were recently convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment by the Makati Regional Trial Court for participating in the mutiny.

Esperon thanked the President for her "compassion" for "our soldiers and their families, including the repentant adventurists." His confidence in the convicted officers who had expressed remorse surprised the audience at the ceremonial parade and was a hint that his Arroyo, the guest of honor, would make a major announcement.

Gambala and Maestrecampo, who were among the core leaders, were sentenced to reclusion perpetua or 20-40 years imprisonment. Army Captains Alvin Elbus, Laurence Louis Somera, Albert Balaba and John Andrew, First Lieutenants Florentino Somera and Geo Bonggat, and 2Lt. Rolando Bayan received prison terms of 8-12 years.

Breaking the spirit

While Oras-Angeles, lawyer for fugitive rebel leader Marine Capt. Nicanor Faeldon, said the presidential pardon sought "to break" the spirit of the Magdalo officers still defiant of the Arroyo administration.

"Those who are holding on to their principles, they are in detention, taking torment. Those who capitulate to power walk free," she told reporters.

Speculations were rife that the nine mutinous troops had already struck a deal with the military because their convictions came a week after they all changed their original plea to guilty. Gambala stood to be the sole ultimate officer of Magdalo, when he was brigade commander in Basilan.

It was "highly probable" that Ms Arroyo signed the pardon papers that were sent to her only on Friday, said Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, who also attended the Camp Aguinaldo ceremony.

"I suppose the President may have signed it already as the announced it," he told reporters.

Asked whether the grant of a presidential pardon would convince other junior military officers, including now Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV who is on trial, to follow Faeldon's group, Ermita said: "They can use them for no reason to help them out of their situation."

Nation's mood

In her speech, Ms Arroyo reiterated that the country was against any destabilization and that she had "full confidence" in members of the military who are loyal to the Constitution. "The dismal failure of the destabilization attempts underscored just how out of touch the plotters are to the mood of the nation," she said.

"The nation wants peace, order and stability, not more political shenanigans."

SAPPHIRE

In an interview with reporters, Esperon said he "appreciated" the Arroyo's announcement of the pardons on his retirement. "At least one chapter was closed while I was about to retire and so that gives us an idea of the thrust of the government for unity and reconciliation for people who are willing to be united and reconciled and go with us in pursuing this country forward," he said.

In his valedictory speech, Esperon told the President that he accomplished the mission given to him. The AFP officers and men, he said, "have made a strong stand against military adventurism," decimated the communist guerrillas to meet the government's 2010 goal to defeat their insurgency and thwart a blow to the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group with the demise of its top leaders, Khaddafy Janjalani and Abu Sulayman.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez yesterday said the pardoned soldiers "can always invoke freedom of speech as long as these statements in exercise of freedom of speech are not more than libels against the government or are not seditious."

Gonzalez said the pardon was conditional and could be taken back if the soldiers committed a crime. With reports from Leila B. Salaverria and AP

Son of Mindanao told: Bring peace to your land

Frontpage A4

gain his retirement than his Arroyo immediately indicated that a new job for him in government was forthcoming.

"Have a well-deserved vacation, Jun," she said during the turnover ceremony at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City. "Hurry back to serve our people again."

Her statement elicited applause from the crowd that gathered to say goodbye to Esperon and welcome Yano. Esperon also served as head of Ms Arroyo's Presidential Security Group in 2002.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said he had no clue on what Esperon's next job would be.

'Peace within reach'

Ermita said the move had that Ms Arroyo had hinted that she would take Esperon back abroad this "maybe the President has something in mind already."

"You know, people like Esperon, there's always a place for them," Ermita told reporters. "I'm very sure his services will be tapped. It would be a pity if his talents were not used."

Saying that "peace was within reach in Mindanao," Ms Arroyo acknowledged there were "political dynamics" in current efforts to forge peace with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. (See related story on Page A12.)

"We are working to sort them out," she said. "But I can't think of nothing more desirable for the people of Mindanao and our nation than peace during our administration and hopefully, peace during the tour of duty of the son of Mindanao as Chief of Staff of the AFP."

Call to MILF

Ms Arroyo urged the MILF to go back to the peace table.

"It would really be such a nearest moments if our Muslim brothers did not take advantage of our dedication to this effort and reconcile a peace deal in the next few years," she said.

Ermita said he hoped that Yano's designation as AFP chief of staff would be appreciated by the MILF and would convince the separatist group to return to the negotiating table.

The Palace chief said the designations of a guy from Mindanao, they will understand the degree of importance and significance that the national leadership, President Arroyo, is giving the power process in Mindanao because when you come from the place, you understand the pressure, the people," Ermita said.

'Yano snowball to avalanche'

In her speech, Ms Arroyo said that Yano was also supposed to be the anti-insurgency campaign. "Yano is snowball to an avalanche toward the defeat of the [communist] rebels by 2010."

She told Yano she chose him to be the next AFP chief of staff because he came highly recommended by the defense and military top brass and even by her Cabinet.

"And more importantly, you were clearly rated by Team AFP itself in my discussions with many field officers," she said.

She said this was owing to Yano's "reputation as a soldier's soldier, a no-nonsense combat leader, simple and frugal, as you were the whole AFP in for during your tour of duty and one with a heart."

'Super pep'

Ms Arroyo also showered Esperon with praises, saying he carried out his work as chief of staff "at a time when as a widower for many years, you had to be what we all women try to be, a super mom."

"You have to be ... a super pep because you had to raise very young children at a time exactly when your career was taking off," she said, referring to the time Esperon became a widower. He has since remarried.

She said "that challenge in your private life ... contributed to the excellence of your work in public life."

Ms Arroyo thanked Esperon for doing well in dismantling several guerrilla fronts of the communist New People's Army and his work to the new separatist terrorists, especially to Muslims.

Meralco says it supplies customers power at least possible cost

By Ronnel W. Domingo

MANILA ELECTRIC CO. YESTERDAY said that it was complying with its obligation to supply its customers electricity at the least possible cost.

In a statement released while the Joint Congressional Power Commission hearing on the issue was going on, Meralco president Jesus Francisco said records available on the Meralco website would show that the firm had "sought to optimize the overall cost of generation and transmission for our customers."

Meralco maintains its purchases from National Power Corp.'s special low-cost generators made as the transmission line runs at P1.50 per kilowatt-hour before it even sends supplies from its contracted independent power producers (IPPs), Francisco explained.

Meralco's three IPPs—Quezon Power Philippines, First Gas Power Corp. and FGP Corp.—provide about half of the utility's supply needs.

Francisco said that in March 2008, the overall cost of generation and transmission of the IPPs stood at P3.25 per kWh.

"In comparison, the combined generation and transmission cost of its other suppliers was P4.27 per kWh," he said.

Pacifica Morales, retained Government Service Insurance System Chair Winston Garcia's claims that the utility charges the highest residential distribution rate in the country.

Morales vice president Jesus de la Peña said the company's socialized prices were deemed treated favoring small power consumers.

"The company's combined distribution, supply and metering charges to a household using 200 kWh or less is only P1.34 per kWh," de la Peña said. "These households constitute more than three million and account for three-fourths of all its residential customers."

Francisco said Meralco had always been transparent in all its dealings and that all the information on Meralco's costs, rebates and services were freely available on its website, www.meralco.com.ph, to let the Energy Regulatory Commission.

"Meralco is closely supervised by the governmental through the ERC, which has the power to require the submission of documents from Meralco and to open and examine the company's books and operations," Francisco added.

Meralco questioned on pass-on charges

From page A1

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Francisco recalled, set the tone of the hearing, declaring at the outset that "if Meralco does business outside its area, satellite is important, that is what you call exorbitant dealing."

"The principle here is to keep your private business interest at arm's length from the public interest. Apparently, business has become fashionable when it comes to Meralco," Santiago said.

"Right now I can see that there is something wrong in Meralco's practices. The president himself admitted that the company that Meralco buys electric meters from is partly owned by Meralco itself. Clearly, there are management abuses that should have been stopped by the ERC (Energy Regulatory Commission) which is party to the high cost of power," Santiago said.

Government Service Insurance System Chair Winston Garcia, in his testimony, claimed that Meralco had the highest distribution charge among all power utilities in the country—three- to four-fold P2.44 per kilowatt hour for distribution versus the P1.48 in Cebu and P1.64 in Davao, and P3 centavos in Subic.

High rates due to inefficiency

"More than the generation and transmission costs, the inefficiencies of the management is the main reason for the high power rates," said Garcia, who has been waging an all-out battle to lack the Lopezes out of the Meralco board.

"It can't see any reason why the distribution cost of Meralco which has 58 times asset turnover have four other small utilities is higher. The (reports on profitability) in the last six years there have been no dividends," Garcia said.

"My contention is getting a return on our investment. It is the inefficiency of management that has kept them from giving their shareholder dividends and causes overcharges. It is my fiduciary duty to make this company earn. This company cannot only 3 percent when it should be earning 12 percent. Because the other is not a board, it is a guarantee," he added.

Garcia said that Meralco engaged in self-dealings with Lopez companies such as those in manufacturing electricity poles, power transformers, electric meters and information technology.

"All in all, I believe that these self-dealings add P3 billion annually to First Philippine Holdings' bottom line on top of the P20 billion in power purchases from its private generation firms," he said.

Francisco admitted that one of its main suppliers for electric meters was GE Co. which was

ENRILE

HONASAN

ordered by Honasan to stop supplying to Meralco.

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Miriam backs Garcia bid to break up Meralco

By Dec. Cabacungan Jr.

THE CHAIR OF THE JOINT Congressional Power Commission (Pepercom) yesterday backed a proposal by Government Service Insurance System Chair Winston Garcia to break up Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) to foster the creation of smaller concessions.

"There's no problem with that, we already have a model. What used to be the MWSS (Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System) which was divided into two did not

From page A1

necessarily lead to higher rates," Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said in an interview with reporters.

"In fact, it made a lot of money by our standards because it's now privatized. But it probably did not make money. We in the committee have no objection if that is the intention," Santiago said.

Garcia has offered to buy out not only the Lopezes but all the other Meralco shareholders, including foreign investors, if the Meralco franchise were not made more transparent, efficient and competitive.

Meralco officials claimed that subdividing the concession into two or more divisions would require congressional nod.

Santiago said that since privatization, the government has divested "management itself, (more)" on the part of the Lopezes. Santiago said Congress could amend or repeal Meralco's 50-year franchise "as required by the common good."

But Garcia said he was confident that Congress would be open to splitting up the Meralco franchise because it was so big and profitable to the left to the hands of one family.

If Congress holds it the GSIS chief's game plan, Garcia said he would propose that Meralco form a distribution subsidiary that would then manage the franchise area as an independent entity.

Sen. John Ivenco said that Garcia's proposed split of the Meralco franchise would be "palatable" to Congress as long as there was a guarantee that power rates would go down.

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Francisco admitted that one of its main suppliers for electric meters was GE Co. which was ordered by Honasan to stop supplying to Meralco.

US pressure ousted by Morales-Garcia noted that Francisco himself sat on the board of the company.

Santiago said the sen "irregular" considering that it was critical, by losing from its own companies with a bidding being held just by them.

Corporate bills

Sen. Jose Rizal Emilio questioned Meralco's practice of making adjustments on the charges it dugs on its consumers. Emilio said that since the generation charges were only "pass-through," Meralco should not make any adjustment when it charges the same to its consumers. "You cannot continue to that you are (not) doubling your charges," he said.

Emilio was dispelled when Francisco admitted that "I admit this (internal losses of their electricity used by Meralco for its own expenses) are now currently passed on to Meralco customers at a rate of (only) 5.5 million annually.

Garcia argued that it was unfair of Meralco to pass this over to consumers in the country. Emilio, who described the practice being fried in men's eyes, said, Sir that this was "unconscionable" considering that some of the franchisees' customers were poor.

The senators also questioned the practice of Meralco passing all of its system losses to consumers. Some senators were surprised that the regulatory commission had allowed the utility to collect beyond what the law has pegged at 9.5 percent.

Lax regulation

Santiago blamed "management abuses" not only to Meralco but also to National Power Corp. (NPC) and to the banks, the IPCs.

"There appears to be management abuses and lax regulation on the reasons why the Philippines has one of the highest power rates in the world, second only to Japan in Asia," Santiago said.

Morales's alleged management abuses include excessive perks for its top brass (P97 million for eight senior executive officers and P173 million including directors and the top management), Morales's purchase of power during peak periods that result in high pass-through generation charges to its consumers and the Morales-MPC agreement to ask ERC to allow Meralco to pass on to its consumers its unpaid debts to MPC.

Per MPC, Santiago noted that power rates were higher in Luzon, than in Mindanao and Mindanao MPC generated its rates based on time of use (TOU) that were just passed on to consumers. MPC gave preferential rates to economic zone consumers while passing on the cost of discounts to other consumers. MPC charged its consumers for its investment in government such as including in P7 billion land debts and IPC bought its power from IPPs (independent power producers) but at higher rates than the awarded cost, or the marginal cost, and then passed on the higher rates to the consumers.

Caps on recoverable losses

Santiago said that the ERC should also share the blame because "IPC has neglected its duty to see the save steps to recover, slide system loss, and save guesswork performance-based regulations," valuation of assets, and benchmarking methodology.

The IPC proposed that the unavoided tax (VAT) on electricity rates be removed, but Santiago felt that it was impossible considering that the government needed all the taxes to keep the deficit in check. "It's desirable, but in our practical, it's just a dream, all other senate would seek a VAT exemption," said Santiago.

Sen. Alan Cayetano said that GSIS' stated moves to pry Meralco out of the hands of the Lopezes had seen a shift down the spine of indictments from behalf of the state intervention in private business affairs.

Businesses apprehensive

"GSIS is being used as a corporate raider for public interest that if we melt get lower rates, we will take over the board. Will we do this with Petron, Manila Water and other companies? The business community is afraid that this would be the mode in search of going to the courts or regulatory bodies but they are afraid to say this because the BIR would be knocking on their doors," Cayetano said.

But Garcia insisted that GSIS only wanted to buy into Meralco after selling out its San Miguel Corp. shares.

"By demanding for efficiency we can increase profit and will lower cost of electricity," Garcia said.

He said the GSIS was not interested in running Meralco. "I am here not talking with corporate management to effect changes in the company or to install (my) men in lower electricity bills.

"I believe in entire threefold: to our concerns should be heard. We are talking we can come up with common ground. We are not anti-Lopez we are against how management of Meralco is being done," said Garcia.

Meralco-MP loans

Santiago also ordered the ERC to dismiss the petition of both Meralco and MPC to pass the cost of their loans to their consumers.

"The public has an interest to their borrowings, we should follow the principle that if the consumer is not part of the deal, the consumer should not change them," she said.

During the hearing, it was revealed that Meralco faced a pending petition with ERC to pass on to consumers around P14 billion that it owes MPC to terminate a 10-year supply contract. Meralco director Oscar Hilado blamed said Hilado and MPC came to a settlement back in 2003.

Emilio questioned why Hilado should pass the P14 billion on to consumers as "generation cost" since MPC did not actually generate any electricity.

Manuel agreed and explained the P14 billion, the original settlement was for P25 billion, represented MPC's "fixed cost."

Santiago ordered the ERC to disapprove the petition. "The ERC is giving you a direction. Do not pass on to the consumers," Santiago told ERC Commissioner Alejandro Ruiz. "Understood ma'am," Ruiz replied.

Legislators also recommended the ERC for failing to come up with a cap on allowable "revenues losses" that Meralco and other power distributors could charge to consumers.

Santiago said that the law provided that the ERC set the limit at 9.5 percent, but the regulatory body had yet to comply with the cap on how much of income losses to pilferage and technical reasons should be passed on to consumers.

ALBANO

Where in the world is Albano?

From page A1

Lopez.

"Yes, it's not true. He's with his grandchildren and children," he said, but did not give any details.

No contribution

While legislators said Eo hours working for their turn to question the resource persons, Bayan Rep. Miguel "Mike" Arroyo made no contribution to the hearing.

As chair of the House committee on energy, the President's ex-bolt the chairmanship of being the vice chair of the oversight power commission. He was course with interducing the House delegation. Even there, he goofed. He misled interducing Acodpower partylist Rep. Cesario Belmonte, one of the invited resource persons.

Where Santiago left the room to attend the Senate plenary session, Arroyo also left and let Commissioner Ruiz. As such Pasumbal to chair the rest of the hearing.

Reyes, too

Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes, who plays a pivotal role in regulating the power sector, also made no contribution to the hearing.

On the two occasions that legislators posed questions to him, Reyes called subordinates to answer for him. He left early in the afternoon before the hearing ended.

P15-M hi-tech House voting system fails test

From page A4

Representatives has yet to be used due to technical glitches that stopped the during a day run last month.

Details of such a high-tech flop emerged yesterday, a week after a congressman raised the frustration over the frequent lack of a system and proposed a rather low-tech approach to keep colleagues from leaving while in plenary session: Lock them in (like the rest do).

In a test conducted on the electronic system on April 15, one of every 200 House employees who logged in as "present," only 15 were reflected on the computerized display confirming their attendance, the Inquirer learned.

In a parallel test for counting votes, only 25 votes were registered out of the 200 cast during legislative Buddy Vicaria of the Congressional Planning and Budget Department told in an interview.

Under the system, congressmen can key in their attendance or their votes (yes, no or abstain) on a handheld voting device installed on their respective desks in the plenary hall. Results are then displayed on two wide screens flanking the Speaker's platform.

The installation required the hall's flooring to be raised by six inches for the underground wiring.

In a letter to House officials dated April 18, Santiago, the project's contractor, Intelidata and problems encountered during the dry run were due to lapses in the testing process, not malfunctions in the system it self.

"Due to the limited testing time, we were not able to fully check the uploading of the user fingerprints," said Intelidata executive Mary Ann Pomentacion in her letter to Deputy Secretary General for Technical Services Ireneo Icban.

"To add to this limited testing time, there were a good number of personnel in the room still registering on the same hour of the day, according to the letter, a copy of which was obtained by the Inquirer.

Pomentacion insisted that tests conducted by Intelidata's own technical staff yielded satisfactory results.

The House has yet to pay for Intelidata's fee for the project.

"That's what they said," Herrera quipped, referring to Pomentacion's explanation.

"What we want to see is the system working with our own people. Until that happens, I will not recommend payment of the contractor."

Herrera said another round of tests was scheduled this month with the system installed in four conference rooms and actual congressmen.

Ako Bicol party-list Rep. Florencio Noel suggested that "if it will only cause confusion, we might as well do away with it."

It appears that it was hastily installed without the benefit of a long-term study before it was put in place," Noel said.

The electronic system was one of the last projects instituted by Pangasinan Rep. Jose de Venecia before he was ousted as Speaker and replaced by Davao City Rep. Prospero Nograles in February.

Used for the most lack of quorum, Congressman Rep. Pedro Romualdez last week proposed that the plenary hall be padlocked after the roll call to prevent lawmakers from leaving in the middle of the session and ensure passage of urgent bills.

Romualdez's complaint Leiter prompted Nograles to implement a "double roll call" policy to further check on the congressmen's attendance.

E-mail: jc_news@inquirer.com.ph

NEWS

Send us your feedback: register www.facebook.com/pdinquirer/group or SMS "Globe or Sun <Query>

Consul: OFWs in Lebanon safe

By Margaux C. Ortiz

FILIPINO WORKERS IN Lebanon have been advised to stay indoors and keep off the streets until the trouble in the country between two Muslim factions.

Joseph Assad, honorary consul of Lebanon to the Philippines, said the 23,000 Filipino household help in Lebanon would be out of harm's way if they followed their employers' instructions, like moving to safer grounds if need be.

"Overseas Filipino workers will not be exposed to harm or accidental shootings between warring groups as long as they follow instructions from their employers," Assad said in a statement.

The Lebanese consul said he was continuously monitoring the situation in his country and would immediately advise Philippine officials on any action necessary to protect Filipinos in Lebanon.

Abdel Kader Al Jadid, president of the Filipino-Lebanese Friendship Association said he was hopeful the situation would subside "very soon."

Al Jadid quoted latest reports from Beirut saying the Lebanese Army had started taking over parts of West Beirut as Hezbollah fighters had begun returning to their territories in the south of the city.

Assad said political factions in Beirut have since been trying to forge a dialogue between the Shiite and Sunni groups to prevent any additional violence.

MISS EARTH and her court, from left...Ms. Venus Raj, Miss Eco-Tourism; Maria Rasel Egnia, Miss Air; Karla Paula Rivera, Miss Philippines-Earth; Michelle Felix, Miss Pagcor International; Marian Michelle Odeza, Miss Water; and Ms. Kristelle Lazaro, Miss Fire. PHOTO BY ROY

Second time a charm for new Miss Earth

By Armie Adina

IT WAS A NIGHT OF SWEET VINDICATION for Karla Paula Rivera who was crowned Miss Philippines-Earth 2008 on Sunday, beating 40 contestants from all over the country and Filipino communities abroad.

The 22-year-old model from Cebu joined the Binibining Pilipinas pageant to finish her ballet in advance to the semifinal round.

On Sunday night, she not only bagged the P500,000 prize, she will represent the Philippines in the Miss Earth contest where she will compete with 90 international delegates.

Six years now, the Miss Philippines-Earth pageant has crowned winners who failed to win in the Binibining Pilipinas contest.

Jeanne Sam, last year's Miss Philippines-Earth, had joined Binibining Pilipinas in 2003 and lost.

Rivera will serve as ambassadress of the environment and is expected to take on projects and activities seeking to save the earth.

Emphasis on intelligence

Previous titleholders tested the country's public schools telling children about the harmful effects of global warming and educating them on ways to alleviate ecological degradation. They also campaigned against textiles bedeviling and avoidable down-up drives along the country's coastlines.

Because of these serious responsibilities, pageant organizer Carousel Productions made changes in the process of selecting the winners. While other pageants put emphasis on a contestant's physical beauty, the Miss Philippines-Earth contest gives more importance to a contestant's intelligence and personality.

Carousel also hoped that by inviting local government units to send delegates this year, it could reach more people with its advocacy.

Education vice president Lorraine Schuck said: "After the pageant, these ladies will go back in their hometowns and initiate environmental projects. We would not have been able to broaden our reach if we continued with our former scheme of conducting regional pageants."

Best of nature

On pageant night, contestants were asked how they would explain the degradation of nature in simple folk.

Rivera gave the winning answer: "I will educate them by giving them an example... Through my example I will give locals the best [of] me."

The other winners are just as committed to the environment.

Melanie Felix, who represented the Filipino community in the US East Coast, was proclaimed the first Miss Pagcor Tourism International Ambassadress and brought home P250,000 in prize money.

Air, water, fire

Marie Rasel Egnia was crowned Miss Philippines-Air.

Marian Michelle Odeza, who was adjudged Best in Evening Gown and Best in Talent, was hailed as Miss Philippines-Water.

Kristelle Lazaro who won Best in Cultural Attire was crowned Miss Philippines-Fire.

Tagaytay City's Venus Raj won as Miss Philippines-Ecotourism.

Indong's Jaydelyn Uhlilli was adjudged Miss Congeniality.

Nikki Martin from the Filipino community in the US West Coast won Miss Photogenic and Best in Swimsuit. With reports from Tina Rivero and Pam Greville

Aplus METRO
Edited by Esser G. Dipasupil

3 shot dead by robbers

Trader, 2 cops victims of 6 men in ₱1M heist

By Allison W. Lopez

SIX ROBBERS SHOT DEAD A BUSINESSMAN-lawyer who had just withdrawn P1 million from a bank and two policemen who came to his aid in Paco, Manila at around 10 a.m. yesterday. Three civilians were also injured in the incident.

The Manila Police District immediately released artist's sketches of two of the suspects. One was described as 40 to 45 years old, at least 5'5" tall, the other was about 30 to 40 years old and 5'6" to 5'7" in height. Both carried cal. .45 guns.

Alfred Ty, co-owner of the Asahol Metal Recycling Corp. at Benavidez Drive, Mandaluyong City, was on board his Honda CRV after withdrawing money from the Banco de Oro Angel Linao branch when a motorcycle-mounted hit-park at Dacbo-Gil Avenue corner Merwood at around 10 a.m.

Witnesses told the police that three "bystanders" suddenly fired at the vehicle. One of them broke one of the car's windows with a hammer and grabbed the victim's bag containing P1 million in the hand withdrawn from the bank. By the time Ty was taken to the Makati Medical Center where he was declared dead on arrival.

Two off-duty policemen from the nearby Paz Paco police station—PO2 Francisco Siot and PO2 Jose Tomas Sandoz—heard the gunshots and rushed to the scene. But there other armed men, apparently the robbers' cohorts, appeared out of nowhere and shot the two policemen.

Siot died on the spot while Sandoz was declared dead on arrival at the Ospital ng Maynila. Three civilians, Janine Pauline Belonio, 15; Arwin Nieves, 47; and Rosa Aquino, 58, were also hit by stray bullets.

CLINGING Employees are reflected in the broken side mirror of the van of businessman Lawyer Alfred Ty, who was robbed and shot dead in Paco, Manila yesterday. Two policemen were also killed in the incident. LEO ESCAMOS

MPD director, Chief Supt. Roberto Rosales, said they would exert all efforts to get the suspects especially since two of his men were killed on the job.

"The police is supposed to protect the people from crime, but now they're the ones being killed," he said.

With Nicole Reyes

MMDA seeks extension of landfill use contract

By DJ Yap and Kristine L. Alave

METROPOLITAN MANILA Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando yesterday said he would ask for a three-month extension of the contract which allowed the agency to dump Metro Manila's garbage into the 19-hectare landfill in Rodriguez town, Rizal province.

Fernando said he was in constant communication with Rizal Gov. Casimiro Tinamis III and was hopeful they could still reach an agreement despite the latter's apparent reluctance to extend the contract.

Last October, Tinamis, upon the request of the MMDA and Metro mayors, gave the agency until May 6 to use the landfill for the province's exclusive use. The deadline was later extended to May 12.

Sought for comment yesterday, Tinamis said that it was not him, but the provincial board who would decide whether or not to grant the request.

In a statement through the provincial public information office, Tinamis said his earlier decision to let the MMDA use the landfill was "magnanimous."

At press time, Rizal policemen were guarding the gates leading to the facility and turning away garbage trucks from Metro Manila.

Anthony Munoz of the provincial public information office said that so far, trucks from the cities of Makati, Pasay and Caloocan had been barred from entering the landfill.

An MMDA official, meanwhile, said they had already made preparations on where to take the garbage in case their request was turned down.

"We would like to assure the public that we have the situation under control," said MMDA General Manager Robert Nazareno.

The MMDA, he added, has started assigning local governments in Metro Manila to different landfills in the provinces like those in San Mateo, Laguna, Norzagaray, Bulacan and Clark in Pampanga.

"It's just a matter of assigning which local government should go to which sanitary landfill," Nazareno said.

Metro Manila has been dumping an estimated daily average of 8,000 tons of garbage into the Rodriguez landfill.

Arroyo name has been debased

Antonio Calipio

"TONGPATS." A word I heard almost every day when I was a senior reporter, has been dignified by being included in the jargon of the rich and famous, albeit, corrupt government officials and businessmen.

"Tongpats" is "protong" read backwards.

"Patong," in police jargon, means "under the protection of" as in "Patong si Ging sa mga Sy-and-so at Suong" (Ging is being protected by Congressman So-and-So).

"Tongpats" has acquired a new meaning.

Now, it can also mean "kickback."

Lee Ann Miguel, referred to by another STE-NBN witness, Daisy Hidalgo, as a member of "Grendy Group plus, plus," allegedly used the word "tongpats" in his communications with Hidalgo.

"Tongpats" referred to how much would be added in the STE-NBN contract deal for the Grendy Group plus, plus to fund commissions or kickbacks, said Hidalgo.

Hidalgo has linked the First Couple to the alleged kickback gang.

The names of Gloria and Mike Arroyo have been debased as in the context of "Tongpats si Presidente si FG at talumpati ni ZTE-NBN deal."

And I thought that nothing could beat the debasement of then President Erap when he was linked to Jaworsky, sometimes referred to as angel Jaye Dagger's paredes.

* * *

I wouldn't be surprised if somebody brave and daring enough would claim that presidential spouse Mike Arroyo is the "tongpats" (protector) of some smugglers at the Subic Freeport, the Scott Harbor, and the Manila International Container Port.

So kidding.

Arroyo's name has been bandied about like a hedge of honor by some smugglers in those three ports.

I should know.

The reason I had a falling out with my sister is because basically in that lay outsider's knew to my advice to renounce his relationship or friendship with some alleged smugglers.

If Undersecretary Antonio Villar to come up to President Gloria to express how those friends of the President's spouse had been allegedly using his name and pressuring him to go easy in his antismuggling campaign.

MetroBriefs

Two rookie cops arrested for kidnapping

FIVE members of a kidnap-for-ransom group, including two rookie policemen, were arrested by authorities for allegedly abducting Chinese-Filipino businessman Johnny Sy in Caloocan City last month and demanding a P1-million ransom for his release. Authorities identified the suspects as PO1s Freddie Comagong and Samuel Cerda Jr., both assigned at the Philippine National Police Headquarters Support Service in Camp Crame, and their three alleged cohorts, Jun Jun Mirlas, Augusto Tabuno Jr. and Armando Montano. Chief Supt. Raul Castañeda, chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, said they are still looking for 10 other members of the same group, including two police officers assigned at Camp Crame. Nikko Dizon

2 City Hall workers' suspension ordered

ACTING Manila Mayor Lito Atienza yesterday ordered the preventive suspension of two license inspectors from the City Treasurer's Office accused of extorting money from a shipping company. Rochelle Dalmasi and Alfredo Silva, who were caught in an entrapment operation Friday, will be charged administratively and criminally after the owner of Golden Eagle Shipping Corp., Mario Provendiador, claimed that they extorted P50,000 from him. The two went to Provendiador's office and told him his company need the city government P300,000 for back taxes, police raid, fraternity and duties reportedly offered him a compromise settlement of P60,000 which was further reduced to P50,000.

Allison W. Lopez

DEATH BEGINS IN THE COLON!

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The WORLD

Edna Loreene B. Daez

Lebanese fear slide into new civil war

BEIRUT, LEBANON—LEBANON HUNG BETWEEN fears of all-out war and hopes of political compromise as government supporters and opponents battled with rockets and machine guns in the mountains overlooking the capital.

The fighting saw the collapse of pro-government forces in the Shiite region, a stronghold of rebel Hezbollah gunmen left the streets, heeding an army call for the Shiite fighters to clear out. The city was the focus of four days of Sunni-Shiite clashes that culminated with Hezbollah seizing large swaths of Muslim West Beirut—demonstrating its military might in a showdown with the government.

Thirty-eight people have been killed since Wednesday, when a power struggle between the Hezbollah-led opposition and the US-backed government began erupting into the worst sectarian violence since Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war.

Across the country, there were fears of another slide into civil war.

"I don't believe this is the end," said Hala, a 32-year-old employee of an insurance company who lives in a posh area of the Muslim sector that saw fighting three days ago. She declined to give her name for fear of retaliation.

"They haven't solved the problem yet," she added. "There will be another round."

But some analysts saw Hezbollah's demonstration of its power as paving the way for a solution to end the political crisis. Analysts said the opposition now appears to have the upper hand, which could force the government to compromise.

"The opposition is in control now. Those military victories have on his statement political leverage," said Ayad Ismail Elsamiyeh, a political science professor who is an expert on Hezbollah.

"You can't have a civil war when there is one group that is militarily superior to the other," she said, referring to Hezbollah.

Arab foreign ministers urged the warring factions to immediately cease fighting and said Sunday they will send a delegation to try to broker a settlement between the Hezbollah-led opposition and US-backed government.

After an emergency meeting in Cairo on the Lebanon crisis, the Arab League issued a statement implicitly criticizing the Shiite militant Hezbollah.

"The ministers reject the principle of resorting to armed violence to achieve political goals," it said. AP

Sudan cuts Chad ties after Darfur rebel attack

KHARTOUM—SUDAN severed diplomatic ties with Chad on Sunday, accusing N'Djamena of backing a first Darfur rebel assault on Khartoum and slapped a multi-million-dollar price on the head of the alleged masterminds.

The government said it had repulsed the assault by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), allegedly backed by N'Djamena, which saw the insurgents reach Khartoum's northern outskirts and declared intent of toppling the regime.

"We are forced to sever diplomatic relations with this regime" in Chad, President Omar al-Bashir said on state television following the attack on the capital's twin city of Omdurman just across the river Nile.

"We place the entire responsibility for this attack on Chad," he said, dressed in his field marshal's fatigues.

Chad said it regretted Khartoum's decision, denied any involvement in the attack and condemned a raid on the Chadian Embassy "Chad can only take note of this hasty decision with regret," the government said in a statement.

Uniformed Sudanese men ransacked the Chadian mission in Khartoum, taking away documents and computer equipment, it added.

The Darfur attack in broad daylight, one day after Khartoum warned that rebels were marching towards the capital, marks the first time regional rebels have ever brought battles of varying size to, or to the east of Sudanese power.

A senior official in the military command told the state SUNA news agency that 250 million pounds ($123 million) would be paid to anyone who arrests JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim or provides information on his whereabouts.

Bashir convened an emergency session of the national security council, that included Salva Kiir, the leader of south Sudan which fought in civil war two decade civil war until reaching a power-sharing agreement with Khartoum.

Government forces were on Sunday hunting down remnant rebel forces all over the capital and in neighboring states, rounding up arms and explosives. AFP

FATHER AND THE BRIDE

President George W. Bush and his daughter Jenna Bush, 26, right, pose for photos prior to Jenna's marriage to Henry Hager at the Bush family's Prairie Chapel Ranch in Crawford, Texas, on May 10.

Obama-McCain election contest taking shape

WASHINGTON—A GENERAL ELECtion contest between Democrat Barack Obama and Republican John McCain took shape Monday, even though Hillary Clinton showed no indications of abandoning the Democratic presidential nomination race.

"If Barack Obama wants Hillary Clinton on any of this race, then here," Clinton spokesperson Howard Wolfson said Sunday "Best bet is West Virginia, best bet is Puerto Rico, best bet is Kentucky."

The New York senator is heavily favored to win in all of these primaries. West Virginia will hold its contest Tuesday.

But Democratic Party leaders thinly continued behind Obama, who is now eager to take on McCain.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, who has remained neutral in the nominating epic, gave a pithy outline of the Democrats' three main threats of attack against the Arizona senator.

"He's wrong on the [Iraq] war. He's wrong on the economy. He's a clone of George Bush," Reid told NBC television, while urging Democrats to "relax" and let the Obama-Clinton battle play out until the final primaries on June 3.

Following Obama's victory in North Carolina last week, and his narrow loss in Indiana, Obama's chief strategist David Axelrod said on Fox News Sunday: "We're coming to the end of the process.

"And I think there's an eagerness on the part of the party leadership and activists across the country to get on with the general election campaign," he said.

Senator McCain's base not there campaigning as the nominee is by definition, and I think people are eager to engage," Axelrod said.

With Obama nothing to hold up a symbolic momentum against Clinton, the Democrats' camps denied they were in talks to end their White House race through a deal to cancel Clinton's campaign debts or on the vice presidency.

On NBC, Clinton's national campaign chair Terry McAuliffe acknowledged that "something big would have to happen" for the New York senator to beat Obama to the nomination.

But he added: "We're not going anywhere."

Clinton aides also denied that the candidate last week had played the race card against the African-American Obama when arguing that his support among "hard-working Americans, white Americans" was shrinking.

Heading into Tuesday's West Virginia primary, Obama has for the first time polled ahead of Clinton in support from the superdelegates, who look set to crown the party's champion against McCain. AFP

Sudan cuts Chad ties after Darfur rebel attack

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Drug promises to restore sensation after dental visit

NEW YORK—FOR THOSE who don't like to drool, the duty speech or unknowingly bite their tongue after a visit to the dentist, help might be at hand.

A small drug company said it was approved Friday from the Food and Drug Administration to market the first drug meant to numb the effects of dental anesthesia.

In clinical trials, the drug cut the median time it took for full sensation to return to the lips by about 75 minutes to 60 minutes, or by more than half.

The drug, called Orafeen, was developed by Nicolas Pharmaceuticals, a privately held company in San Diego. The company said it would begin selling the drug to dentists late this year for $12.50 an injection.

After a dentist finished a filling or some other procedure, he or she would inject Orafeen into the gums spot where the anesthetic had been injected.

In a drug study enrolled five adult testers like a trivial test? Hoteler and some dentists who advise the company said it might be useful for children, who can injure themselves by biting their lip or tongue without knowing it.

"Kids tend to chew on their tongue when it's numb," said Dr. Aderca Papas, a professor at the Tufts University School of Dental Medicine. The drug, however, is not approved for children younger than 6 or weighing less than 33 pounds.

With about 300 million anesthesia injections given by dentists each year, company executives say the drug could easily achieve sales of hundreds of millions of dollars a year. AFP

Pro-West party wins Serbia poll

TADIC

BELGRADE, SERBIA—A PRO-Western party declared victory Sunday night in closely contested parliamentary elections that were widely viewed as a referendum on whether Serbia would turn toward the West or revert to the nationalism and isolation of the Milosevic years.

With 85 percent of the vote counted, the Center for Free Elections and Democracy, an independent monitoring group, said that the party of Serbia's president, Boris Tadic, which wants the nation to join the European Union, had received nearly 39 percent of the vote. In a distant second place was Tomislav Nikolic's far-right Radical Party, which advocates closer ties with Moscow, with about 29 percent of the ballots. The party of the outgoing nationalist prime minister, Vojislav Kostunica, was second 11 percent of the vote. About 6.7 million people were registered to vote, including Kosovo's ethnic Serbs.

"The citizens of Serbia have chosen the European path, and Serbia will be in the EU," said Tadic, a former psychologist, as a crowd of his supporters danced and waved European Union and Serbian flags downtown Belgrade. Separate, smaller demonstrations were gathered in protest against Slobodan Milosevic in the 1990s. "We promise that we will make it."

The election was closely fought, and analysts said it remained unclear whether Tadic's party would be able to form a coalition government with minority and other pro-European Union parties. Kostunica's party, the Socialists, Kostunica's party and the Socialist Party of the late Slobodan Milosevic could take days to try and find him off.

During the election, nationalist parties had been expected to make significant gains after tapping into deep and abiding anger over Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia in February. But analysts said economics had ultimately trumped emotions, with voters unwilling to risk returning to the international ostracism of the 1990s.

While other formerly Communist countries have joined the European Union and NATO and their economies are soaring, the average monthly wage here is about 450 euros, or almost $700. That makes Serbia one of Europe's poorest countries. Many people here said they feared Serbia threatened to become Europe's most enduring outcast. AFP

After 2 decades, Palestinians losing faith in two-state solution

By Wafa Amr

RAMALLAH, WEST BANK—Thirty years ago, Arab leaders rejoiced the partition of Palestine and with it a United Nations proposal of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Today, despite two decades of growing global consensus for a new "two-state solution," Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories and in camps abroad look on their Israeli neighbors' relentlessness of 60 years of independence with a sense that their chances of their own state are disappearing.

On offer is less than 22 percent of British-ruled Palestine—almost half what the UN deal offered them 60 years ago.

"Israel's unanimous offers don't meet our minimum demands, so we are debating our options to ease the talks with Israel full," a senior Palestinian official said.

Nearly two decades after their late leader Yasser Arafat gave up on hopes of ruling all of Palestine, many Palestinians question whether they will ever get an acceptable deal on a state, even after Israel's ruling ally, US President George W. Bush, pushed both sides to resume negotiations six months ago.

There is a definite ease," said analyst Mehdi Abdul-Hadi.

"They are saying a two-state solution is a mission impossible."

One option getting in string, said Abdul-Hadi, a prominent Palestinian scholar of national affairs, was to push for a "one-state solution," absorbing Jews and Arabs into a single country—something few Israelis are ready to countenance. "They're saying — let's talk about one secular, binational state," he said of the debate going on among Palestinians.

Though it remains strictly in the realm of hypothetical politics, it is a prospect that has riled Palestinian negotiator Ahmed Qurie has brandished in talks with his Israeli counterpart Tzipi Livni and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. "I told Livni and Rice in January when they offered us less land for a state: 'is that one-state solution won't work.

"Let's have just one," Qurie said.

Bush, who hopes to see a deal on a Palestinian state before he leaves office in January, visits Israel this week to mark the 60th anniversary of its founding—as many Palestinians call the "Nakba," or catastrophe, when Israelis attacks and war between Israel and Arab states forced 700,000 of them from their homes.

For all Bush's declared optimism, Palestinian's President Mahmoud Abbas left the White House last month disenchanted.

Another Palestinian official said: "The debate is over whether we accept the division of the West Bank with Israel, or leave the status quo...the apartheid regime under Israel." That South African reference has also been echoed by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. He is telling Israeli opponents of a two-state solution that the alternative is one state where, if it remained democratic, Jews would in time face Arab majority rule.

"The day will come when the two-state solution collapses, and we face a South African-style struggle for equal voting rights," Olmert said last year.

"As soon as that happens, the days of Israel is finished."

Among 10.6 million people in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, there are 5.3 million Jews. But the Arab birth rate is higher.

Reuters

WHAT'S INSIDE
Garcia wins
Players via playoff /A29

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87 days to the 29th Summer Olympics
Beijing 2008

Aunzo, Rodriguez pull off 1-2 RP windups / A30

ALEX Pagulayan lifts his trophy after beating Poland's Mika Immonen for the World Pool Masters title in Las Vegas.

MASTERS POOL

Pagulayan nails 2nd world title

ALEX PAGULAYAN WILL DELIVER WHEN GIVEN a chance.

The Filipino ace wizard capitalized on an illegal break by Finland's Mika Immonen to seize momentum and eventually nab the 2008 FortyPoker.net World Pool Masters at the packed Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas on Monday.

Pagulayan, already the 2006 World Pool champion, bested the veteran Immonen, 9-6, to clinch the crown that eluded him two years ago and pocket the $20,000 (about P940,000) top purse.

It was a big recovery for Pagulayan, who was trailing at a 3-6 deficit when Immonen, the 2001 World Pool champion, made an illegal break for pocketing a ball but failing to carry two other balls past the headstring.

Taking over, Pagulayan ran out the rack, went on to take the next three and reached the hill, 7-6.

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Li, Le still up; So gains ground after second loss

Leaders after nine rounds (97 names ranked)

T.Daniels –C. Li (China), 2.5—M. Ni Hua (China), 6.5—W. Wei (China), 6.5—W. Yu (China), 6.5—W. H. Wang (China), 6.5—Ye Jiangchuan (Indonesia), 6.5—Wang Yue (China), 6.5—Wang Yu (China), 6.5—Wang Yue (China), 6.5—Wang Yu (China), 6.5—Wang Yue (China), 6.5—Wang Yu (China

Spurs trounce Hornets; Jazz drub Lakers in OT

SAN ANTONIO—SHAKING UP HIS line-up for Game 4, Tim Duncan decided to have a little fun. He threw the ball behind his back and between his legs, then went up for the lay-in.

Big, it was going to be that easy.

Duncan had his best game of the series against New Orleans—22 points, 15 rebounds, four blocks—as host the San Antonio Spurs to a 100-88 victory over the Hornets on Sunday.

"I'm just trying to do my part," Duncan said. "It's just that. You've got to step up at playoff time. It's only or go home. So you've got to step up and make plays."

The Spurs have stormed back from an 0-2 deficit that looked as if it would be tough to overcome, so probably after the losses. It's only or go home. So you've got to step up and make plays."

Now the Spurs, the old guard and defending champions, and Hornets, this year's youthful surprise success story, are even at 2-2 in the Western Conference semifinals.

Tony Parker added 21 points for the Spurs, who are assured of a Game 6 back in San Antonio. Game 5 is Tuesday in New Orleans.

"We've got to play Game 5 the same way we approached Game 3 and 4," said Hornets Manu Ginobili said. "That is going to be huge, so we don't have to have any satisfaction with what we just accomplished. We are the same way we started."

Jazz, Lakers also even

In New York, the Utah Jazz held off the Los Angeles Lakers for a 123-115 overtime victory to take tie up their best-of-seven Western Conference semifinal series at 2-2.

The two, playing at home, gave up a 12-point lead in the final 4:22 of regulation but led throughout overtime as Jazz the Lakers for a second successive game.

"We just kept our composure," Deron Williams, who had 29 points and 14 assists, told reporters. "Once we sent it into overtime, we felt like we could still keep going."

The Jazz also took advantage of back opening that showed Andrei Kirilenko scored 21 points and had 10 assists but had two shots blocked by Utah's Andrei Kirilenko in overtime.

Game 4 will be Friday back in Salt Lake City, where the Jazz are 4-1 in the playoffs.

Total control

The Spurs led by as many as 27 and were ahead nearly the entire game. They shot 51 percent (39-of-76), while the Hornets were cold when it counted. They shot 37 percent through three quarters and finished 33-of-92 (40 percent) from the field.

Chris Paul led the Hornets with 23 points.

"Our intensity was terrible. From Game 1 to Game 4, ours has gotten worse and (hats) his games better," Hornets coach Byron Scott said. "And that's been the difference. They've just picking our butts right now. Is that simple enough?"

San Antonio scored 40 points in the paint. New Orleans' plan to keep Parker out of the lane didn't work, as he belted his way through heavy traffic at times opportunity to get to the rim, and he prospered.

Ginobili, who also got to the rim as well in Game 3, wasn't as successful in Game 4. But he hit jumpers and was 3-points, finishing with 15 points. Parker and Ginobili each had eight of the Spurs' 27 assists. The Hornets had 12 assists—five from Paul.

The Spurs outrebounded the Hornets 45-36 and outscored them 36-18 in the decisive third quarter.

New Orleans' David West had three blocks but was held to 20 points on 6-of-15 shooting and was visibly frustrated. Jannero Jarmico Pargo scored 11 for the Hornets.

Bryant's back

Bryant said he was fighting back spasms from early in the first quarter.

"This measures for me. Clutchness did a great job," Bryant said. "They did a terrific job. They did big plays when they needed to."

And Los Angeles helped by sending the Jazz to the line 8 more times than the Lakers, who made it worse by missing 11 of 23 free throws.

Lamar Odom had 26 points and Pau Gasol scored 23 for the Lakers. AP

SAN ANTONIO Spurs guard Tony Parker drives to the basket past New Orleans Hornets guard Chris Paul during the first quarter of Game 4.

Djokovic stretches prowess on Rome clay

ROME—NOVAK DJOKOVIC ALREADY displayed his prowess on hard courts this season. Now, he's shown he's capable of dominating on clay too.

Djokovic won the 12th title of his career Sunday, rallying to beat unseeded Stanislas Wawrinka, 4-6, 6-3, 6-3, at the Rome Masters.

"I was aiming for Rome and Roland Garros as my two priorities on clay courts this season," Djokovic said. "Now I have more confidence approaching big events on clay and other surfaces as well."

The tournament was an important clay-court warmup for the French Open, which begins in two weeks.

The third-seeded Djokovic won the Australian Open in January for his first Grand Slam title, then captured the Masters Series event in Indian Wells, California, in March.

Djokovic's third victory of 2008 will move him within 310 points of No. 1 Rafael Nadal in the ATP rankings.

"This year has been like a dream for me, but I want to continue. I want to finish the year as No. 1...in the race," Djokovic said with a big grin, as if almost amazed at his own precociousness.

Djokovic is already on top of the ATP Race rankings, which coincide with the actual rankings at the end of the year.

Djokovic, who turns 21 later this month, has been winning more than top-seeded Roger Federer and Nadal lately. He reached his first Grand Slam final at the US Open to end 2007, and has followed his win in Melbourne by taking two of the four Masters Series events this year so far.

Nadal was upset by Juan Carlos Ferrero in the second round in Rome, and Federer fell to Radek Stepanek in the quarterfinals.

Djokovic improved to 8-1 on clay this season and 25-5 overall. AP

Massa rules Turkey GP; Ferrari leads

ISTANBUL, TURKEY—FELIPE MASSA won his third straight Turkish Grand Prix on Sunday to give Ferrari its fourth straight victory to put it in the driver's and his F1 championships.

But Ferrari ace convinced after Lewis's title challenge gained steam despite another weekend of lost points.

Massa held off McLaren driver Lewis Hamilton's challenge for a 3.779 second victory at the Istanbul Speed Park circuit to give his championship lead a 19 point.

Massa joined Hamilton on 28 points as rival Ferrari teammate and overall leader Kimi Raikkonen, who finished third, by seven.

A victory at Bahrain and a runner-up finish at the Spanish GP has Massa closing off a start that featured retirements in the first two races.

"I'm right in there to the fight," Massa said. "The competition is very high, but after some races I feel that I can be competitive everywhere and I'm just happy to realize the gap a little bit, being similar to Lewis and just concentrate on the next races."

Though Raikkonen couldn't make it a third straight victory 1-2 sweep, the defending champion overcame his car's set up problems and a start that had him stuck with a clipped front wing around the first lap to finish third on the podium. AP

SCHERKFEST Jeff Gordon celebrates after his victory at Richmond International Raceway on Saturday night. AP

Sorenstam bags third 2008 crown

WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA—Annika Sorenstam won for the third time in eight events this season, capturing the 80s Bethesda LPGA Open on Sunday with a 6-under 66 to break the tournament's 72-hole record by five strokes.

After an injury-plagued winless 2007, the US LPGA Tour's eight-time player of the year signaled her return to form a all but complete.

"That last nine holes, I just dialed it in," Sorenstam said. "The rankings were right. The club was right. The direction was right."

She subdued a challenge from Lorena Ochoa on Saturday and did the same for Jang Jeong on Sunday. Ended the day with a 10-under 205 to win by seven strokes.

With four birdies in a five-hole stretch on the back nine, her last-second rival broke Kevin Na's 36-hole record set two years ago on the Kingsmill River and Spa's River Course.

Sorenstam hit almost every fairway and almost every green, overcoming an early bogey with birdies whenever Jang closed to within two shots.

Jang finished with a 73 to share second with Christina Kim (69), Allison Stokke (69) and Karen Stupples (66). AP

Garcia wins Players via playoff

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FLORIDA—Sergio Garcia seemed up his dog his work, maybe even his career, with one small putt on Sunday.

Garcia lagged a 40-foot putt from the fringe to 3 feet for the clinching 17th at TPC Sawgrass, then kissed his putter.

The trick that screwed him so many times before, including earlier in the week and most notably at last year's Ryder Cup, became his ticket off the Island round at The Players Championship.

The 28-year-old Spaniard rolled in one ordeal putt after another on a treacherous day some bigger than the 7-footer he put on No. 18 that forced a playoff against Ted Goydos, and finished the week tied for a major at with a near-perfect no shot in sudden death.

"It feels good," Garcia said. "There were tough greens to putt on this week, so quick so they were with the wind and everything.

"It's definitely getting there, but there's still room for improvement, which is good."

Goydos, who started the day with a one-shot lead, would have won it in regulation. But he pushed his tee shot on No. 16 in the right rough, hacked out to about 30 yards in front of the green, chunked a pitching wedge to 15 feet, missed the par putt and created the first playoff in 22 years at The Players.

It didn't last long.

Goydos, hitting first, matched Garcia's approach on the wedge to 3 feet, but the cloudy skies and wind with a splash a few feet in front of the green.

"The hole was designed to do exactly what it did. It got me instead of somebody else," Goydos said.

Garcia, with no margin for error, followed with a wedge that landed on the green, caught a slope and stopped 4 feet away. He missed the birdie putt, but it didn't matter.

"I played good golf, and at people have found out, that doesn't mean was unfortunately," Goydos said. "You can't control it. In defense, I couldn't tackle the Hilo guy that won't reserve tank. You just have to accept the guy how you said shoot-out."

Garcia and Goydos each finished at 3-under 283.

Garcia, whose seven PGA Tour victories are the most by any player under age 30, earned $1.71 million from the richest purse in golf and established himself as a major contender with the US Open a month away.

"The goal is to keep getting better, and the only thing this tells me is to keep working hard and to believe in myself," Garcia said. "And when I do believe in myself, I think there's not a lot of guys out there that can beat me."

The consolation for Goydos was $1.026 million for second, more than he earned for winning the Sony Open last year.

Jeff Quinney had a chance to join the playoff. He went happy-free for 14 holes in pars that topped 66 kph (98 mph) at times, but failed to save par from a bunker behind the 18th green and had to settle for a 70 and third place alone, one shot behind. AP

SERGIO Garcia celebrates

10th Premier League plum for Man United

WIGAN, ENGLAND—MANCHESTER United manager Alex Ferguson insists that no team can dominate English soccer.

United's 10th Premier League title in 16 years may prove otherwise—even ahead of his team's all-English Champions League final against Chelsea on May 21 in Moscow.

The defending champions secured their title Sunday after beating Wigan, 1-0, on the final day of the season to edge Chelsea by two points.

"If we had lost the title today it would have been a great knock but the great thing is we are bouncing into the final," Ferguson said. "I am very proud to have survived so long but I am in a great club which makes it easier for me than the rest."

United finished the 38-game season with 87 points, two more than Chelsea, which was held to a 1-1 draw by Bolton.

Cristiano Ronaldo put United ahead in the 53rd minute from the penalty spot and Ryan Giggs slotted in the second in the 80th after coming off the bench for the second half to match Bobby Charlton's club-record of 758 games.

"It was a great goal to settle us down. It gave us a nice goal cushion," Giggs said after raising the trophy while fireworks exploded around the stadium. AP

GIGGS (center) lifts the trophy as his team celebrates. At right is Ronaldo.

SPORTS

BIG DOUBLE: Cyca Rodriguez (right) and Perdie Aunzo show their trophies after completing the Filipinos' sweep in the Kota Kinabalu tournament.

Aunzo, R'riguez lead twin 1-2 RP windups

FERDIE AUNZO AND CYNA RODRIGUEZ poured a 1-2 Filipino sweep of the men's and ladies individual titles in the ninth Sarawakmas Amateur Open while Tonton Asintio and Anya Tarnpiroe Bonifacio secured in the team event in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, on Sunday.

Aunzo painted down back-to-back birdies from No. 15 en route to a three-under par 69 and an even-par 216 total, giving him a five-stroke victory over a charging Asintio, who fired a course-record 67 at the Nexus Golf Club and rallied from joint sixth to second at 221.

Nicholas Fung, Malaysia's top amateur, finished with a 70 and finished joint third at 226 with Taiwanese Chin Jui-tsung, who carded a 74.

Rodriguez, on the other hand, closed out with a three-over par 75 for a 216, to beat Tampiroe by four shots in the 54-hole tournament serving as the ICTSI Inchi tuneup for the Subic Amateur Open which flees off this Friday.

Tampiroe, after pitching up for her side-to-tournies campaign in the Philippine Amateur Golf Championship late this month in Baguio, shot a 76 for 232.

The scorers by the Filipinos in both divisions underscored their readiness for the Subic tournament and the Malaysian Amateur Open are next week, where a tougher field is expected.

Aunzo opened a five-shot lead after six holes and was never headed. Asintio fought back from seven shots down to salvage second with his record was that earned him a round-trip ticket to Hong Kong.

Peter Villabet shot a 74 while Joey Linares made a 75 as they finished in joint sixth at 229 with Lim Yu Shoot of Taiwan, who had a 75.

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Filipino booters battle Brunei, eye AFC sweep

By Cedelf P Tupas

ILOILO CITY—THE PRESENCE of defending champion Tajikistan notwithstanding, there is an air of confidence within the Philippine Team on the eve of the Asian Football Confederation Challenge Cup Qualifying Tournament here.

"We expect to win all our games," top striker Phil Younghusband, who plays for top flight club Chelsea Reserves in London, told sportswriters during yesterday's press conference.

MORE STORY
Cielo Jean is Complet
3:30 p.m. — Philippines vs. Brunei
Libacao Home Football Plant
5:30 p.m. — Tajikistan vs. Bhutan

Six goals in four games

"I didn't travel 7,000 miles to lose," added Younghusband, scorer of six goals in four games when he led the Philippines to qualification in the Asian Football Championships two years ago.

Younghusband's bold prediction will be put to the test for the first time today when the nationals take on Brunei in the opening match at 3:30 p.m. at the Iloilo Sports Complex pitch here.

Tajikistan and Bhutan play simultaneously at the Iloilo Home Football Plant.

National team skipper Emilio Caligdong, proud son of Siaton, Negros, said the presence of several Filipino internationals lured abroad, like Younghusband and his brother, James, has added to the team's level of confidence.

Striker Chad Gould, who is also based in England, midfielder Dan Granfield and defenders Aston Del Rosario and Phil Greenbeck have remained for another year of duty for the Philippines, while tall, 18-year-old goalkeeper Neil Etheridge will play for his mother's country for the first time. (See story below.)

Still, national coach Norman Ingalaw remains wary of Tajiks, whom the Filipinos play on Thursday in a game that will probably determine which team advances to the AFC finals in Hyderabad, India, from July 30 to Aug. 18.

Attack-minded side

Not sure, though, Ingalaw is upbeat about his team's chances against the Shoestrings, whom the Philippines defeated, 4-1, during the Asean Championship Qualifiers two years ago in Bacolod City.

Ingalaw said he will bring to an attack-minded side against Brunei, ranked 189th in the world.

"It doesn't matter if we win, 1-0, just as long as we dominate the match," said Ingalaw, whose team is ranked 179th, the second-best team here next to 133rd-ranked Tajikistan.

Etheridge's goal in between posts

By Cedelf P Tupas

ILOILO CITY—AS HIS TEAMMATE BLASTS a safety long-range ticket goalwards, Neil Etheridge makes one quick leap to his left, grips the ball with one hand and, with authority, smothers a wicked right-footed spurt that covers three-fourths of the pitch, past the midfielders, and heading nicely in front of their strikers.

On the sidelines, the move gets a gesture of approval from a member of the coaching staff.

Goalkeeping—long considered as football's most unglamorous position—is the Philippine line's new face in the 18-year-old Etheridge, a tall, muscular young man from Enfield, London, who traces his roots to Tarlac.

"Hopefully, my arrival here as a goalkeeper will inspire others to become better in that position," the 6-foot-1 Etheridge, a former England Under-16 international, told the Inquirer.

Switch to another country

Players with dual citizenships who have played for one National team in their youth can switch to another country at senior level. And Etheridge has forfeited the chance of representing the global football powerhouses in the future by playing for the Philippines.

"It wasn't the easiest decision to come to but I made it as I wanted to represent the country," said Etheridge, whose mother, Melissa Dela, is from Tarlac. "My mother is the eldest of 13 children and the other side of the family lives in the Philippines. They will come to watch me play."

Like many other young players, Etheridge, who took up the sport when he was 9, didn't always want to be a goalkeeper. Instead, he saw on the opposite side of the pitch, creating problems as defenders and scoring goals as a striker.

Special and unique position

But when his youth coach asked him to switch positions, he obliged, knowing that "being a goalkeeper is a special and unique position."

"Almost everyone wants to be outfield players," he said. "But people need to understand that it's a must doesn't have a goalkeeper, it can't play.

"Goalkeepers do a lot of things that people don't see. They talk to the defenders. And of course, aside from making saves, we also have to play football. The back four (defenders) work with goalkeepers, passing the ball around the back to make plays and they also get involved in the strategy on attack. So, I hope people will take notice of that when I play."

Etheridge, a reserve for English Premiership side Fulham FC, will make his international debut on Tuesday when the Filipinos meet Brunei in the opener of the Asian Football Confederation Challenge Cup Qualifiers.

Etheridge, who recently inked a birth cert—a requisite for Filipinos, joined the London-based club when he was 15. Prior to that, he was also part of the Chelsea youth academy along with Filipino internationals Phil and James Younghusband.

It was actually Phil who invited Etheridge to join the Philippine squad.

"Phil (Younghusband) convinced me to go and told me that I would enjoy the experience," said Etheridge, who counts playing basketball as one of his pastimes.

Acknowledging that football isn't the most popular in the Philippines, Etheridge—who had the best debutante record in the youth league last season—believes can make a difference.

"I would like to help raise the profile of football in the Philippines as it's not a massive footballing nation, and we can help generate more interest not only among the fans but for the future development of players," he added.

FILIPINO BOUND: Phil Etheridge hopes to boost RP goalkeeping to another level.

Nat'l age-group tourney draws top shuttlers

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

THE COUNTRY'S FINEST JUNIOR players are vying scene in the 2nd National Singles Age-Group Badminton Tournament presented by Exxon at the SM Megamall Activity Center in Mandaluyong.

The eliminations stage will be staged on May 25 and 26 in the SM Cyber Shaw Boulevard in Mandaluyong with the top performers advancing to the finals on May 28 and 29 at Megamall.

Jennifer Ramos, president of Philippine Badminton Association, said former Olympian and national players Weena Lim have been invited to the opening ceremony at PSSC.

The biggest junior competition this summer is being held in cooperation with Sid Sports Central and also sponsored by 1800 Li'l Inner-30 Drinks.

Events on tap are boys' and girls' singles for players 8 to 16 years old with an Open division for varsity and foreign players 16 years and older.

The tournament is sanctioned by the PBA and handled by national team coach Ruel Chan.

Registration deadline is on May 12 with the draw date on May 15 at Valenzuela Badminton Center in San Juan. Registration fee is P300 with additional P100 for an extra entry. For details, visit the event website, www.ictsm.ph.

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1-year T-bill yield rises to 5.993%

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo rings the bell during Monday's debut of San Miguel Beer Corp. at the Philippine Stock Exchange. Looking on are San Miguel Corp. chair Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco and president Ramon Ang. JOHN ALCANTARA

BSP seen increasing policy rate to 5.5%

By Michelle V. Remo and Doris C. Dumlao

THE YIELD OF ONE-YEAR TREASURY BILLS ROSE nearly a percentage point yesterday as banks sought a higher rate due to spiraling inflation.

The one-year bills fetched 6.913 percent during yesterday's auction, 92.3 basis points higher than the previous one of 5.993 percent. (One percentage point is equivalent to 100 basis points.)

The government decided to scrap the auction of 91- and 182-day treasury bills in the second quarter due to a perceived weak demand for the shorter-dated securities.

"It is really inflationary expectations that is pushing [rates] up," [Higher].," Finance Undersecretary and acting Treasurer of Treasury Roberto Tan said in a briefing after the auction.

Year-on-year inflation hit 8.3 percent in April from 6.4 percent in March, prompting monetary offi-

>TURN TO

San Miguel Beer bucks trend, gains on stock listing

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

SHARES OF SAN MIGUEL BREWERY Inc., the beer unit of conglomerate San Miguel Corp., sparkled in its listing yesterday after being picked up by long-term investors during its initial public offer last week, sizzle traders said.

SMB gained 6.25 percent or 50 centavos to close at P8.50 a share on its maiden trading day. It opened at P8.30, up from its IPO price of P8 a share.

At this market price, underwriters of the offer estimated the company's market value at P123 billion. SMB raised P6.16 billion from its offering, which consisted of 77 million new common shares and 693.47 million shares held by parent SMC.

Of this, 539.37 million shares were sold abroad and 231.16 million shares comprised the domestic offer to lenders and local small investors.

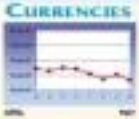
Underwriters said the domestic and foreign tranches of SMB's IPO were 3.5 to 2 times oversubscribed.

SMB and concurrently San Miguel vice chair and president Ramon Ang said the brewery's IPO price of P8 a share offered a premium to investors.

"We chose to go with the lower end

>PHOTO, B4

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

43.615 =

As of 5 p.m., May 12, 2008

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

(For more market reports on Page B2)

Stocks end higher

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.9-PERCENT higher yesterday on expectations of positive corporate earnings, though concerns about record-high oil prices persisted, dealers said. The composite index added 29.07 points to 2,880.99, up from the day's low of 2,775.08.

>STOCKS, B4

Greenspan predicts long recession

I HAVE BEEN WRITING JOKES FOR eight years and I am beginning to run out of ideas, so now I scour the international papers for interesting stories. I found one that will appeal to all women and also to men with a sarcastic disposition. In fact, the end of the story will leave you with a happy glow. It is taken from an article in the Boston Courier and concerns an elderly couple who were married, but not to each other. The man was 65 and the woman a few years younger but for true love, age is not a barrier.

The couple went to a nearby small town named Oakridge and visited the only psychiatrist. By the very nature of their profession, psychiatrists hear extraordinary statements but he was surprised when the couple asked him to watch them making love and comment on their technique. He agreed and the couple undressed slowly, kissed and cuddled for about 10 minutes before getting on to his couch. Then, after another 10 minutes of foreplay, they made love greatly and with much affection before satisfying each other.

When asked for his opinion, the psychiatrist said, "It was beautiful to watch and your technique is flawless. I hope I will be like that in 30 years time." "Can we come back again next week," asked the couple and he agreed. That went on for 10 weeks until the psychiatrist became curious. "Why do you always come here when it is unnecessary?" "Well," said the man, "if we go to a motel, it is likely we will be seen and it costs $75. If we come here, we are safe, it only costs $50 and I get $40 back from Medicare."

Despite setbacks in the last few days, the three major indices are within striking distance of crossing the 200-day moving average on the upside. Personally, I don't think that is important but many technical analysts do. It crossed the 50-day average about two months ago but it is trending away from a slowly declining 200-day moving average. Almost all the second-quarter results are known and merchandise did better than financial analysts expected.

Financials, however, are still producing poor results so there are plenty of write-offs still to come. UBS might cut another 8,000 jobs after it wrote down an $11.4 billion loss in the first quarter. It raised $13 billion to restore its capital but many more jobs might be at risk, as it still employs 77,000 people. Fannie Mae, a government-sponsored mortgage lender, reported a worse-than-expected loss, cut its dividend and is raising $6 billion in new capital through a share sale. Commerzbank, Germany's second biggest bank, has dropped 51 percent, as writedowns totaling $1.3 billion. Net income declined from $628 million to $416 million.

ABN reported a massive loss of $7.8 billion, surpassing its previous loss of $3.3 billion. The company needs to raise $12.5 billion to strengthen its balance sheet and the shares fell another 8 percent. So far, companies have written off $100 billion and raised $200 billion in fresh capital. Citigroup alone re-shed $900 billion of its assets from $1.2 trillion to $1.7 trillion. These are not being written off but are now known as "legacy assets" to be sold as and when possible. Although Citigroup has already written off $30 billion, further losses are expected.

Alan Greenspan said that the US slipped into "an awfully pale recession," and might continue to languish for the rest of the year. We are clearly wrestling with economic growth as it percent. It is too soon to call an end to the credit crisis stemming from the collapse of the subprime mortgage market. The economy is retreating to a more inflation-prone period. Import prices are rising, as are wages overseas, adding to pressures already caused by soaring cost of food, energy and commodities." He portrayed the economy as being caught in a tug-of-war between credit-rich businesses on the one hand and money-losing institutions on the other."

Greenspan said that contrarian suggestion for the rest of the year might be that the United States can hope for and is the most likely outcome. "That is certainly the most benevolent and probable scenario. We are in a recession but the declines in unemployment have not been as big as we would expect to see. A recovery won't begin until home prices show some sign of stabilizing, relieving pressure on financial companies to write off mortgage related softness. I think they have a good way to follow you will have prospective buyers for financial companies and investors. It is possible, but not probable, that prices would bottom out by the end of the year." He saw inflation as more of a threat and said, "We are now back where we were before the end of the Cold War."

This is very bearish and many analysts agree with him because there has been a record number of put options for the next three months. Obviously this would only be done on the expectation that the market would fall substantially. Bearish puts have risen 47 percent since a year ago and with oil hitting a new high of $126.20 a barrel, consumer spending is going to be under pressure. The rise in food prices is even worse and the stocks of 2009 hedge-arm out as taxpayers will not go for subsidies were added as a discount.

In Europe, the economy is slowing, home prices are falling and inflation is increasing but so far, the European

MR. BEARBULL IN

Mr. Bearbull

Alan Nathan

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PHILAMLIFE POSTS RECORD P22.7 BILLION IN GROSS PREMIUMS; STRENGTHENS LEADERSHIP IN LIFE INSURANCE INDUSTRY

MAKATI, Philippines, May 7, 2008 – The Philippine American Life and General Insurance Company (Philamlife), the country's leading life insurer, had another record year in 2007, with gross premiums reaching P22.7 billion, a 15.9% increase compared to 2006. The company reported that its life insurance operations generated P7.4 billion in new business, growing a strong 57.6% compared to the previous year.

Commenting on the company's 2007 performance, AIG Country Head and Philamlife President and CEO Jose I. Cuisia, Jr. said: "Sales of our single premium variable life products surged, fueled by aggressive agency and marketing initiatives, and a strong market preference for investment-type products. Our financial strength and stability make us the wise choice for potential investors. In 2007, we had consolidated assets of P170.0 billion and stockholders' equity of P49.5 billion. Investment income increased 3.1% to P9.4 billion. Total revenues amounted to P36.7 billion, 14.0% higher than the previous year. Net income adjusted for foreign exchange was P4.8 billion, a 15.8% increase versus the previous year's P4.1 billion. Pretax income was P2.8 billion in 2007."

"Our distribution reach and attractive products have also given us an edge over our competitors. We maintain the largest sales force in the industry at over 7,000 agents, and continue to receive a solid contribution from our bancassurance operations, which generated P1.2 billion in total premiums last year. We also focused on other distribution channels such as telemarketing and direct marketing."

"Moreover, we recently completed our transition to a line of New Generation products that offer attractive solutions to education, investment, life protection and retirement insurance needs. We have also generated substantial sales from cross-selling. Being a diversified financial institution, our clients also have access to the vast array of Philam Group products including personal, banking, credit cards, health care, asset management, and property and casualty insurance."

The Number One Life Insurance Company

With its strong 2007 performance, Philamlife solidified its position as the country's number one life insurer, a distinction it has held for six decades now. The latest official industry figures (2006) show Philamlife leading in terms of premiums, revenues, investment income, assets and net income. "What has made us the leader all these years is our continued focus on customer satisfaction, which has made Philamlife a household name in the country" said Mr. Cuisia.

"In 2007, we paid out P8.6 billion in insurance benefits and claims, 25.3% higher than the previous year. We were once again named a Platinum Trusted Brand by Reader's Digest Asia, becoming the only financial institution in the nation to receive this award for five consecutive years. The award was based on a consumer survey measuring the following criteria: trustworthiness, credible image, quality value, understanding of customer needs and innovation."

Philamlife Board of Directors Elected

In its recent annual stockholders meeting, Philamlife re-elected Edmund S. W. Tse, as Chairman of its Board of Directors. Mr. Tse is currently Senior Vice Chairman and Worldwide Head of the Life Insurance and Retirement Services Division of American International Group, Inc. (AIG). Philamlife also elected the following as members of its Board of Directors: Cesar A. Buenaventura, Managing Partner, Buenaventura, Echauz & Partners; Reynaldo C. Canteras, SVP - Chief Financial Officer & Chief Actuary, Philamlife; Cesar T. Cruz, EVP and Chief Investment Officer, Philamlife; Jose I. Cuisia, Jr., President and CEO, Philamlife; Francis G. Estrada, President, Asian Institute of Management; Mitchell Khalid, Deputy President and Chief Operating Officer, Philamlife; Rolando J. Remulo, Senior Managing Partner, Romulo, Mabanta, Buenaventura, Sayoc & De Los Angeles Law Offices; and Washington Z. Sycip, Founder, SGV Group. During the meeting, the company also declared a stock dividend of P275 million, which increased the company's paid-up capital to P2 billion, the largest in the Philippine life insurance industry.

Philamlife's Innovation

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

NAME OF CONTRACT	LOCATION	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT (P)	CONTRACT DURATION
1 unit – MOTOR VEHICLE	Office of the Provincial Governor, Provincial Capitol, City of Tagbilaran, Province of Bohol	For sale of the Office of the Governor	1,000,000.00	One unit

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

(a) For bid to be filled with adequately from Duly Licensed Philippine Entity with Valid Trade License, Mayor's Permit, Tax Clearance, and such other requirements as may be required by the Provincial Government of Bohol.

(b) Duly accomplished Bid Form with Bid Bond, Bid Security, Performance Bond, Warranty Security, Omnibus Sworn Statement and Bid Documents.

(c) Bidders must submit proof of authority of the signatory to bind the bidder to the contract.

(d) Bidders must submit proof of payment of the Bid Documents.

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(z) Bidders must submit proof of payment of the Bid Documents.

Activities	Schedules
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	May 12, 2008
2. Pre-Bid Conference	May 19, 2008, 2:00 P.M. (BAC Conference Room, Capitol Bldg., Tag.)
3. Opening of Bids	May 19, 2008, 2:00 P.M. (BAC Conference Room, Capitol Bldg., Tag.)
4. Post-qualification	May 19, 2008
5. Bid Evaluation	June 1-2, 2008
6. Notice of Award	June 3-4, 2008

It's the coal, mommy!

THE LOLA AT THE PALACE, SPEAKING before business groups recently, tried to explain why the economy rises in Luzon here there is high.

It was not the high price of imported oil, she told them, who felt by the way is now more than $120 per barrel.

Rightly so, because oil accounts for only one percent of the fuel used by power generating plants on the islands.

She therefore put the blame squarely on Mendiola.

* * *

MENIOLA could now free some sources rained by one of the local economy, 6000, president and general manager Wilfredo Garcia, regarding some details of its operations.

On the issue of high power rates in Luzon, even pointing that blackouts because inefficiencies, the distributor is hardly the main cause of the problem.

Power plants in Luzon hardly use expensive imported oil, says, but rebut about coal, mommy dear?

Among the power plants serving the industry-heavy Luzon, imported—and also highly overpriced—coal accounts for about 51 percent of the fuel.

And coal supply remains the monopoly of the Napocor media, with the cooperation of some personalities close to the Palace.

Coal suppliers are still making a killing in the country, which only happens to have the second highest electricity rates in Asia.

Only recently, Napocor awarded a P6.65-million coal supply contract to a small company—a really small company, with capital of about P50,000—which was apparently incorporated in Cebu but registered in the business center of a small hotel in Quezon City as its address.

The company is called Transpacific Consolidated Resources Inc., or TCRI, which Napocor insisted from out of the blue to bid for a coal supply contract worth P620 million, but rescinded by the same Napocor with a P6&6-million contract.

The unexplored coal, again, accounts for 49 percent of the fuel used in Luzon power plants.

* * *

THAT'S probably the reason why much public private power companies, Napocor chairman Jesus Arguelles answers for coal. How else can the Napocor media make a killing out of unexplored coal?

In the world spot market for coal this year, for instance, the price was $100 per metric ton. But last year it was only $76 per metric ton.

Why didn't Napocor last year go for long-term contracts, when all indications pointed to a continuous rise in the price of coal?

And compare these prices with those contained in private power firms' Quezon coal power plant owned by the Lopez group, the same controlling interest in Meralco for instance took out a long-term contract for coal at $68 per metric ton, while the one called ITEMG (with German interest) bought at $86 per metric ton.

Napocor's own coal-fired power plants producing between 22,000 and 3,000 megawatts. By the state, onward feels likes to buy coal on a shipment-by-shipment basis. Why?

* * *

THE 10KTH license construction and shipbuilding giant Hanjin hit the headlines lately because of an ill-fated attempt to bribe a small town mayor. Really now?

Everybody is saying that Hanjin is so close to the state administration, it has become the target of bad media.

Well, it is said that, for lots of its relationship with the Lola of the Palace, Hanjin could get things done here fast.

If that is so, what so-called was Hanjin thinking when it tried to bribe a small town mayor? What for? Some mayor's pocket?

As Hanjin executives have explained, they only told the mayor that Hanjin would consider local contractors for building of aggregates for its construction site of its multi-billion dollar shipbuilding facility in Misamis Oriental, Mindanao.

Still, Hanjin doesn't only consider the local supplier if it could compete in terms of pricing.

It seems that reports of the alleged bribery came about because one time, the Lola at the Palace was confronting the source regarding some government-owned debts to the Hanjin shipbuilding project.

From what I gathered, somebody confronted the mayor saying, as if in defense, that Hanjin was the one that owed to the Lola. Give reporter-country-listed the exchange. The text, as they say, follows:

Then some pure down here is no message here a question. And the mayor did not accept the bribe?

That this new administration is opening things up to Hanjin, to me, is not a bad thing at all. I would even shout for the Lola.

For me: Hanjin's shipbuilding facility in Misamis can employ more than 20,000 workers easily.

Now, one wood costs $60 million or more. In a ratio of dumb labor-cost economics, for about 40 percent of the price, Hanjin already has orders for more than 30 vessels.

Estimated payroll for these orders is P36 billion. Are you sure what can be buying power can do to the other businesses in Misamis Oriental, plus the whole of Mindanao, and ultimately the whole country.

* * *

ENVIRONMENT groups Bongong Kalikasan Movement and Ecowaste Coalition are up in arms against the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for allowing a Singapore company to set up a biogas power plant in the Pasonia dumpsite.

The company is called Sungco Green Energy, which burns the garbage dumped in Pasonia to produce biogas that, it says, fuels the electric plant.

It is like the DENR is encouraging the Antipodes to go on and on, according to environmental groups, because it is the only way the new plant can run on.

So, according to BKM president Jose Pepe, garbage has long ceased to only an equivalent of 10 percent of methane gas, and it's not gone to the atmosphere.

Pepe notes that Payatas is the dumpsite for all sort of garbage, including non-biodegradable waste, which pollutes water sources, causes the emission of toxic water gas, which, in turn, causes cancer.

Actually, the environmental groups are pushing for the conversion of Payatas into a mini forest, encouraged by a law—Republic Act 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000—passed by Congress eight years ago that sought the closure of dumpsites, such as the one in Payatas, by 2006.

But the DENR approved the request of the Payatas operator to extend its business up to 2007, which was last year.

Six months, Ecowaste Coalition is reportedly planning to sue the government for allowing the Payatas dumpsite to go on, ad infinitum.

BREAKTIME

Comercio & Bawot III

1-year T-bill yield rises

From page B1

daily to admit that consumer price increases this year would breach the official target of 4-5 percent.

The government originally planned to raise P90 billion from the auction, but decided to import only P1.87 billion worth of bills to avoid a further increase in the one-year interest rate.

Had the Bureau of the Treasury accepted P6 billion worth of bids to comply with the borrowing program, the yield of the 364-day bills would have reached 7.211 percent, or 1.117 basis points higher than the previous one. Tenders for the 364-day bills hit P6.46 billion.

Tan said the increase in interest rate was not a reflection of weak appetite for the one-year debt instruments, but only an indication of investors' decision to choose in rising inflation.

American investment banking giant Merrill Lynch already sees the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas raising its benchmark interest rate by 50 basis points in 3.3 percent this year to control the upsurge in food consumer prices.

In a global commentary dated May 9, the bank also revised upward its forecast rises on next year's inflation rate for the Philippines to 6.4 percent this year, the fastest pace in three years, from its earlier projections of 5.5 percent.

San Miguel Beer bucks trend . . .

From page B1

[illegible] SMB's P61 price target] assessors have an upside on their capital. They [assessors] say the reward of a 3-percent cash dividend yield, which is better than putting your money in the bank," Ang said.

San Miguel chief Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. said that for the first quarter of 2008, SMB's net sales rose to P21.3 billion, up 12 percent from P18.8 billion in the previous year. Sales volume grew 18 percent, reaching 47 million cases in only three months.

Here in line after SMB's [illegible] get the initial and secondary public offering of San Miguel's packaging and food businesses in the first quarter of 2009, Ang said.

Stocks end higher

From page B1

The all-share index was up 16.64 points or 1.744-43.

There were 142 winners and 38 decliners, while 62 stocks were unchanged.

Turnover surged to P4.6 billion from Friday's P1.5 billion, partly boosted by trades in San Miguel Brewery Inc. (SMB), which was the most active issue in its second public offering price.

Stocks opened weaker following [illegible] on Wall Street and subsequent losing waves all three highs of $126.20 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange on Friday.

Investors, however, swept consumer issues from inflation and picked up battered stocks later in the session.

"The Philippine market is playing catch-up with its neighbors. It was behind last week because investors worried about consumer inflation," said Jose Mottar at AB Capital Securities.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. was up 0.6 percent at P2,400.

AFP

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
[illegible] Building, 807 Shaw Blvd., Mandaluyong City

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATIONS FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office applications for Alien Employment Permits:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National / Citizenship	Position
GANGJOO KWON AL MEDICAL CLINIC INC.	[illegible]	Marketing Manager
NATIONAL SEED CORPORATION OF THE PHILIPPINES	[illegible]	Project Leader – Transportation Hauling Team
NATIONAL SEED CORPORATION OF THE PHILIPPINES	[illegible]	Technical Supervisor – Capital Expo Refinery Team
NATIONAL SEED CORPORATION OF THE PHILIPPINES	[illegible]	Technical Specialist – Capital Expo Refinery Team
NATIONAL SEED CORPORATION OF THE PHILIPPINES	[illegible]	Technical Specialist – Capital Expo Refinery Team
NATIONAL SEED CORPORATION OF THE PHILIPPINES	[illegible]	Technical Specialist – Integration Team
NATIONAL SEED CORPORATION OF THE PHILIPPINES	[illegible]	Executive Consultant
NATIONAL SEED CORPORATION OF THE PHILIPPINES	[illegible]	Project Leader – Regulatory Approval Team
NATIONAL SEED CORPORATION OF THE PHILIPPINES	[illegible]	Co-Team Leader – Capital Expo Team
NATIONAL SEED CORPORATION OF THE PHILIPPINES	[illegible]	Team Leader – Integration Team
NATIONAL SEED CORPORATION OF THE PHILIPPINES	[illegible]	Director – Chief Technical Officer
[illegible]	[illegible]	Manager
[illegible]	[illegible]	Maintenance Engineer – Reprocessing
[illegible]	[illegible]	Technical Lodge Manager
[illegible]	[illegible]	Consultant/Advisor
[illegible]	[illegible]	Technical Supervisor
[illegible]	[illegible]	Technical Supervisor – Capital Expo Refinery Team
[illegible]	[illegible]	Technical Specialist – Capital Expo Refinery Team
[illegible]	[illegible]	Technical Specialist – Integration Team
[illegible]	[illegible]	Executive Consultant
[illegible]	[illegible]	Project Leader – Regulatory Approval Team
[illegible]	[illegible]	Co-Team Leader – Capital Expo Team
[illegible]	[illegible]	Team Leader – Integration Team
[illegible]	[illegible]	Director – Chief Technical Officer
[illegible]	[illegible]	Manager
[illegible]	[illegible]	Maintenance Engineer – Reprocessing
[illegible]	[illegible]	Technical Lodge Manager
[illegible]	[illegible]	Consultant/Advisor
[illegible]	[illegible]	Technical Supervisor

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National / Citizenship	Position
TECHNOSTONE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, INC.	[illegible]	IT Manager
THE MANAGEMENT INC.	[illegible]	Corporate Project Development
[illegible]	[illegible]	Senior Project Engineer
[illegible]	[illegible]	Consultant
[illegible]	[illegible]	Vice President
A.G. SURBATORS INC.	[illegible]	Marketing Consultant
A.G. SURBATORS INC.	[illegible]	Marketing Manager
A.G. SURBATORS INC.	[illegible]	Operation Manager
A.G. SURBATORS INC.	[illegible]	Plant Manager
EMERALD ENERGY CORPORATION	[illegible]	Plant Manager
A.G. SURBATORS INC.	[illegible]	President
FILTRADE (1988) INC.	[illegible]	Managing Director
RECREATION TRADING CO. LTD.	[illegible]	Assistant General Manager
[illegible]	[illegible]	General Manager
[illegible]	[illegible]	Assistant General Manager
[illegible]	[illegible]	Manager
[illegible]	[illegible]	Manager

If you have any information/objection to the above-mentioned applications, please communicate with the Regional Director.

RAYMUNDO G. AGRAVANTE
Dir. Regional Director

SIGNATURE

San Miguel to write off ₱1B worth of Monterey assets

By Dante L. Lucas

FOOD AND BEVERAGE GIANT San Miguel Corp. (SMC) yesterday said it would write off a significant amount of assets from one of its subsidiaries as part of preparations to consolidate its food companies under a separate listed entity.

In a text message to the business, SMC president Ramon Ang said P1 billion worth of assets would be written off from the books of Monterey Pigging, a unit of SMC subsidiary Monterey Foods Corp.

The company blamed the write off for its failure to meet the April 14 deadline for the submission of its 2007 financial statements to the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Philippine Stock Exchange.

In his message, Ang described the company's move as a "cleanup in preparation for SMC Food's listing."

He had earlier said that the conglomerate—as part of its move to diversify into other business lines—would consolidate, spin-off and list all its food businesses under a single corporate entity.

However, unnamed sources in the auditing industry recently let word the issue revealed that the amount of assets that might have to be written off could reach P2.5 billion, based on preliminary results of an ongoing "re-audit" of the company's books.

"It looks like they have uncovered some questionable inventories of Monterey and some receivables, also," a source said, requesting anonymity because he was not authorized to speak on the issue.

SMC earlier told the exchange that it would have to restate its financial reports for 2005 and 2006—and consequently report lower earnings for 2007—because of the inventory cleanup.

Before 2007, SGV & Co. acted as SMC's external auditor.

Reached for comment yesterday, SGV managing partner David Balangue said he was in the process of verifying with other company associates the veracity and accuracy of the report.

Last month, SMC told the bourse that Monterey overstated its net income and retained earnings figures in the last two years, causing a delay in the release of the company's financial statements.

The was due to "certain adjustments made by Monterey, affecting its receivables and inventories," cited Ramon del Rosario Jr. and Estanislao Gabriel to co-executive.

Because of this, he said Monterey will have a smaller net income for 2007 and less retained earnings for the previous year.

ROUNDUP

PNOC OKs sale of Petron stake

STATE-OWNED PHILIPPINE NATIONAL OIL Co. (PNOC) approved the sale of Saudi Aramco's 40 percent stake in oil refiner Petron at a board meeting yesterday, officials said.

Aramco has said it would sell the Petron stake to London-based investment fund Alphaomega Group for $500 million.

PNOC also holds 40 percent of Petron and has the first right on any sale.

"We based our decision on a number of factors including the fact that the purchase of these shares by the government runs contrary to our policy of retaining government stakes in corporations and letting the private sector run commercial enterprises," Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes said in a statement after the meeting.

PNOC also did not exercise an option to transfer the right to purchase the stake to a third party. REUTERS

PSBank profit down 4%

METROBANK'S thrift bank unit, Philippine Savings Bank, posted a 4-percent drop in first-quarter profit due to lower income from trading activities.

PSBank said profit hit P251 million in the first quarter, down from the P261 million in the same period last year.

Interest income rose by 6 percent but noninterest income declined by 78 percent on rising interest rates ended trading gains. DAVID C. IGNACIO

Globe inks deal with Apple

GLOBE Telecom, SingTel, Bharti Airtel and Optus later signed an agreement with Apple to bring the iPhone to the Philippines, Singapore, India and Australia later this year.

The four companies announced the signing yesterday but did not give further details.

BDO offers ₱5B in notes

By Doris C. Dumlao

BANCO DE ORO UNIBANK, the universal unit of the SM group, yesterday started offering P5B in their retail bond issue that would qualify as supplementary capital carrying an interest rate of 8.5 percent for the first five years.

The bank aims to raise at least P5 billion from the public offering.

The debt securities are in the form of subordinated debt notes, which BDO can redeem after five years or by May 2013.

If BDO won't exercise this call option after the fifth year, it will have to jack up the yield by 2.36 percentage points.

Portion of the funds to be raised will be used by the bank to exercise in July the call option on a $109-million tier 2 loan made by Equitable PCI Bank, which was acquired by BDO. The rest would be used to increase the bank's loan book.

PNOC-EDC income up 20%

By Elizabeth Sanchez Lacson

GEOTHERMAL ENERGY FIRM PNOC Energy Development Corp. yesterday said its net earning net income in the first quarter grew 20.3 percent to P1.4 billion from P1.16 billion in the same period last year.

In a report to the Philippine Stock Exchange, PNOC-EDC said the profit growth could be attributed to the completion last year of its build-operate-transfer contracts for power plants in Leyte, which lowered its expenses.

The company, however, said that with foreign exchange loss of P1.21 billion in 2008, first-quarter income dropped by 4.2 percent to P1.2 billion from P1.256 billion in 1997.

Revenue during the quarter was down by P455.1 million or 8.7 percent to P4.21 billion, from P4.66 billion a year ago due largely to the decline in the average price per kilowatt hour of its electricity sales.

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20 March 2008

DEPARTMENT ORDER NO. 2008-11

SUBJECT : REVISED SCHEDULE OF LTO ADMINISTRATIVE FEES AND CHARGES ON MOTOR VEHICLES AND TORC'S PLATES

In compliance with Executive Order No. 218 dated 15 March 2000 as implemented by DOF-DBM Joint Circular 2000-2 dated 04 April 2000 the following revised schedule of LTO administrative fees and charges on motor vehicle registered plates covering CY/FY Department Order No. 93-950, are hereby approved for implementation:

	APPROVED RATES OF FEES AND CHARGES
I. Cost of Plates, Tags and Stickers:	
a. Cost of Plates	
1. Regular motor vehicle plate (per pair)	450.00
2. Motorcycle plate (per piece)	150.00
b. Stickers	
1. Validation and plate year tags	60.00
2. Denominator	60.00
c. Replacement of validation stickers	300.00
II. Duplicate Plates	
a. Plate Production Fee	100.00
b. Lost Plate (regular)	450.00
c. Lost Plate (MC/TC)	150.00
III. Vanity Plates	
a. Select Edition	10,000.00
b. Premium Edition	15,000.00
c. Limited Edition	For Auction
IV. Transaction fees for Vanity License Plates:	
a. Transfer Fee	200.00
b. Revision of Records Fee	200.00
c. Annual Renewal Fee	500.00
d. Duplicate Vanity License Plate	3,000.00
e. Duplicate Fee for CLP Sticker	50.00
f. Close and Privately Utilize transfer of plates	20,000.00
V. Optional/Motor Vehicle Special Plates	
a. "Three Alphas and three numerics"	10,000.00
b. "Three Alphas and two numerics"	25,000.00

All other existing fees, penalties and fines not herein listed shall be continued to be enforced at the same rate.

The revised rates herein prescribed shall be published once a week for two (2) consecutive weeks in two newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines and shall take effect fifteen (15) days thereafter.

All Department Implementation Orders, Circulars and other Administrative Issuances in conflict with this department order are hereby deemed revoked, amended or revised accordingly.

IN EFFECTIVITY - This order shall take effect fifteen days (15) after receipt of copies thereof by the Office of the National Administrative Register (ONAR) U.P. Law Center, Diliman, Quezon City and publication thereof in two (2) newspapers of general nationwide circulation.

FOR GUIDANCE AND STRICT COMPLIANCE.

(Sgd.) ALBERTO H. SUANSING
Assistant Secretary

APPROVED:

(Sgd.) LEANDRO R. MENDOZA
Secretary

Borrowing plan may change anew

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE GOVERNMENT IS MULLING over plans to make revisions in financing programs for the year, as rising domestic interest rates continue to push its borrowing costs higher.

The government's borrowing programs is currently set as such as way that it will borrow 70 percent of its funding requirements for the year from domestic sources and 30 percent from foreign sources.

The 70:30 borrowing mix was a revision of the original program of 60:30 in favor of domestic sources.

The Department of Finance decided to increase the share of domestic borrowings from its total borrowing program for the year to temper the peso's appreciation. Foreign borrowings contribute to the building of dollar reserves which, in turn, causes the peso to strengthen.

But some analysts have said that the latest increases in domestic interest rates should encourage officials to review its borrowing mix. Observers said it would be more prudent for the government to reduce its domestic borrowing in favor of foreign credit, given the increase in domestic interest rates.

But according to Finance Undersecretary Roberto Tan, it is still too early to tell whether the rising domestic interest rates will substantially affect the government's debt management efforts.

Tan, who also serves as acting national treasurer, said though that he would be discussing with Finance Secretary Margarito Teves the proposal to revise the borrowing mix.

The 70:30 borrowing mix translates to domestic borrowings of P268.7 billion and foreign borrowings of P195.4 billion.

The borrowings are intended to pay off part of the government's maturing obligations.

In yesterday's auction, the 364-day treasury bill rate fetched 6.975 percent, or 92.2 basis points higher than the previously recorded rate of 2.993 percent.

In April, inflation had hit 6.3 percent, faster than the 6.4 percent in March. This kept the monetary officials to meet the government's target of limiting the rise in consumer prices to an average of 3 to 5 percent this year.

"That [possible change in the borrowing mix] will be part of the ongoing review of macroeconomic assumptions," Tan told reporters.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas earlier changed its projected inflation for the year, from a range of 3 to 5 percent to a range of 5.3 to 6.3 percent.

Reports growth target was revised from 8 to 6 percent, while the 91-day treasury bill rate is now expected to reach anywhere between 4.5 and 6.5 percent, higher than the original target of 3.5 to 3.5 percent.

Mr. Bearbull

First page B1

central bank has held its rate steady at 4 percent. The Bank of England's key dealer problems have still been in the 5 percent.

The PSEi has...stayed itself from the rest of the pitcher. Last Friday Wall Street, all States stock markets and Europe were weak, yet the PSEi has broken out of a bear that has been forming over the last few weeks despite renewed foreign selling. Characters has been on the market so it looks as if the pension funds are actively supporting it. In exuberance, Atlas, which will open a new mine in mid-June, ahead of schedule.

Manganese prices in the world market have been rising sharply this year and have increased by 10 percent in the past two weeks. This bodes well for AEN, the only listed company that I know, which currently produces manganese ore. This must be one of the reasons why AEN stocks outdoor performance as well and is at its year's high. AEN has been included in the PSE holdings sector index of the PSE. TRIM, in which AEN has a 35-percent stake, ran also included in the services sector and has also been performing well in the market recently.

Department of the Philippines
Department of Science and Technology
FOOD AND NUTRITION RESEARCH INSTITUTE
General Santos Avenue, Bicutan, Taguig, Metro Manila, Philippines
Tel. Nos. 837-2934 to 37 (DOST-10 Ext. 210) Fax No. 837-2937-38

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The FOOD AND NUTRITION RESEARCH INSTITUTE – DOST invites prospective medical laboratory contractors which passed through validation of laboratory capability a Center for Disease Control (CDC) accredited reference laboratory to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following services:

1. Laboratory analysis for 10,000 FBS (Lipid Profile)
2. Laboratory analysis for 10,000 Mineral and Creatinine, SGPT, Uric (HPG)
3. Laboratory analysis for 11,000 strips by Kato technique
4. Urinalysis for 10,000 urine using Clinitek

The total Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) is P6,670,000.00

Bid forms may be obtained from the FNRI- Data and Records Generation Property Section, Field Bldg. DOST Upton, Bicutan, Taguig City, Metro Manila from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM during office hours starting May 15, 2008.

Pre-bid conference will be held on May 22, 2008 at the FNRI Conference Room. Attendance is a MUST for all concerned parties namely BAC members, Technical Working Group (TWG) members and accredited suppliers. Bread opening will be held on June 6, 2008 at the same venue. Price of bid documents is P6,670.00 which is non-refundable.

For more information, please call Ms. Yolanda D. Perez / Mr. Wilfredo D. Sanchez, Jr. at telephone no. 837-81-46.

FNRI reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and entertain award to the lowest offeror proposal or most advantageous to the government. FNRI assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expense or loss that may be incurred in participating in the bidding.

(Sgd.) LEONARDO V. NARCISO, Ph.D.
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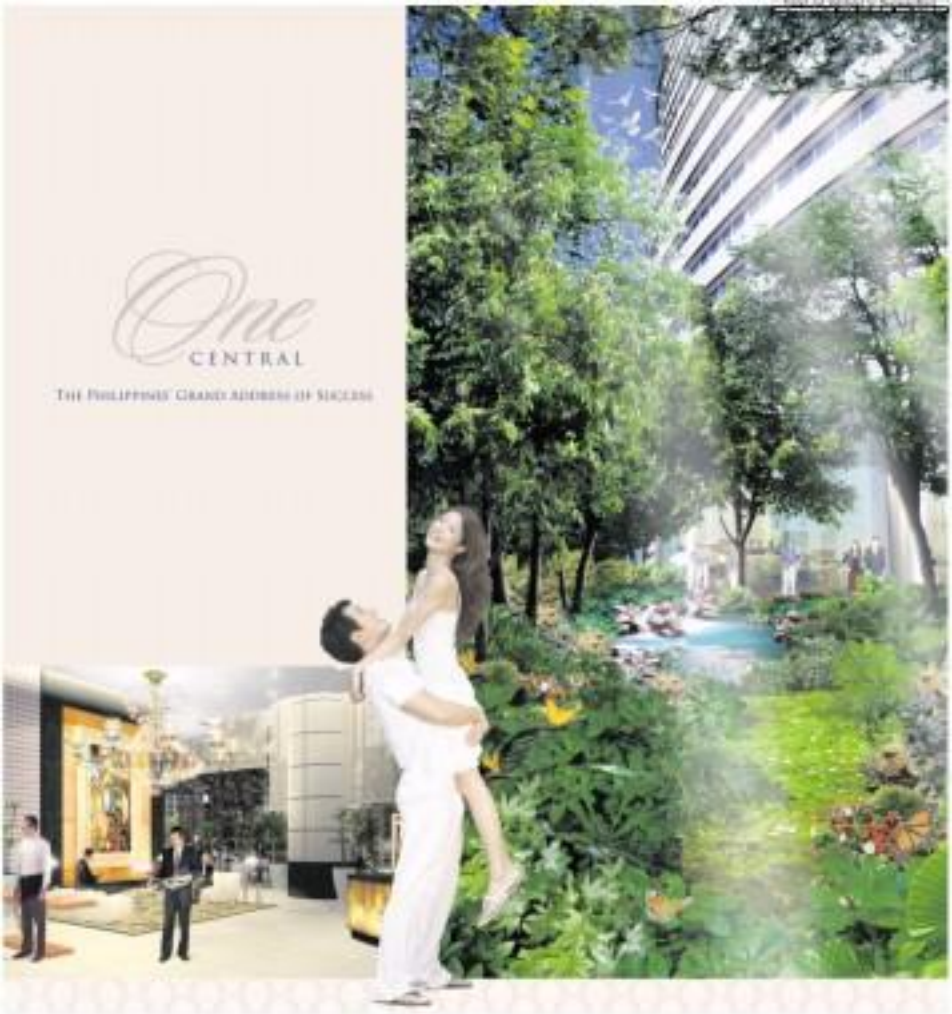

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LIFESTYLE
Editor Thelma Sioson San Jose

ARANETA in the race

Six-pack Ironman sells six-packs

Jim Araneta loves both the ale and the race. How does he do it?

By Leica Carpo

BEER* CONNOTES HEFTY beer bellies, smoky pubs and drunken college leg parties—an image light years away from the hard core training, single digit body fat, Lycra-clad lean mean workout machines of your typical triathlete.

Balancing a long-time passion for beer and a serious commitment to a sport lifestyle is something Jim Araneta, amazingly, manages to do.

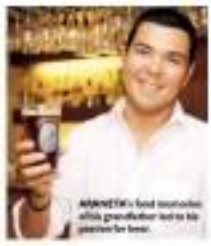
From a peak of 215 lbs, Araneta trimmed down to 175 in several months due to an intense swim, bike and run regimen. He finished his first Ironman in 13-plus hours.

The "Ironman" president of Global Beer Exchange (Gilbey) is going back to an early infatuation—beer—and is now poised to launch over 30 varieties of premium beer in the Philippines.

Premium flavors

Gilbey's select, premium select and super premium beers are leagues away from

SEE PAGE C2



ARANETA's food memories of his grandfather led to his passion for beer.

AT THE opening of Dusit Thani Hotel's classy Japanese restaurant Ume Izu and Robert David Wolp, Dusit Thani Hotel's GM Frank Grassmee, Florian Thauer and representatives Rowan Thauer, and Irene Santiago

Japanese restaurant named finalist in global hospitality awards

UME, A NEW POSH JAPANESE restaurant, opened at the world-renowned, classy Dusit Thani Manila a few weeks ago. Recently it has been named a finalist in the Hotel World Global Hospitality and Design Awards held in Las Vegas, no less, pulangpus.

Designed by the prestige Design World-wide Partnership (DWP), a Bangkok-based and award-winning design firm, Ume com-prises the Luxury Restaurant and gross. It was named one of the frontline together with restaurants from Hong Kong, Macau and Miami. Not bad, huh.

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using YSL Photo Solutions

RESTAURATEUR Ralph Peter Jacinto, Lizel Ventura and Gregg Rex Ong

QUIET Thani Hotel lives lady Natalie Bronsman, her pal Sarah Watkinson, rap-man Jamie and Bonnie Zuckerman

ALMA Perez, Nancy Salvador, Michiro Tadiosa and Jo Tanagtanco

PETER BANK, VP Domingo Uy and Kerwin Gherser

TIARA Ycasiano Abes-Ramos Zaragoza

Belo Clinic opens in Trinoma

The Belo Medical Group is truly one of a kind, pulangpus. And that's kinda hard to beat, diba?

It's the country's top name in the field of dermatology and cosmetic surgery, offering a wide range of treatments in its clinics in shopping malls like The Podium in Ortigas and Robinson's Makati.

Belo recently opened a new clinic on the third level of Trinoma in Quezon City. It coincided with the unveiling of the second volume of Dr. Vicki Belo's Belo Magazine, with the gorgeous Claudine Barretto, as you, on the cover.

With this opening, the Belo Medical Group attracts clients from all walks of life, making it a super success story in both the medical and business fields, pulangpus.

Leveling over such specialized industry for 18 years now, this dynamic mini-boss with four B's, Dr. Vicki is considered one of the most successful entrepreneurs in a field that was virtually unheard of years back.

"We aim to be accessible to many people who want to avail of our services," says Vicki, the company's medical director, popularly known as "Doctor to the Stars," dahlings.

The spin-off Trinoma Belo was transformed into a party area by Vicki's close pal Cynthia Rimorin, whose sons of jetsetter-flag-ging heavy fun chow by Bayou Mesquite of Peppermill Catering, and the to-die-for sweets by Buddy Trinidad of Park Avenue Desserts.

Remembrance, Vicki it had her very own crooner and heartthrob, tall, handsome reunite of talent Dr. Hayden Kho, who obliged to do a few song numbers, including a duet with Angela. As the end, there were a few awesome colossal fireworks display, pulangpus.

Helping our fashionable hostess entertain the guests were her two children, Quark and eye-catching beauty Cristalle.

Also present at the grand affair were TV and movie stars plus hosted camera-hogs, publics like GMA 7 executives Dee Ong, de Jesus and Edgi Dominguez; Vicki's ex-husband Atom Henares and girlfriend Karen Jones; medical director Raul Sibera and wife Carol Mangaser; plus film critic and columnist Butch Francisco.

Check out the other Belo Medical Group clinics at Shelford Plaza, Makati, Tomas Morato, QC, Greenhills, San Juan, and Pampanga, dahlings.

"We're definitely in for a new set, pulangpus. And if not many sold, I get nothing but praises for my skin and how I look considering the lifestyle I have.

Thanks to the fabulous skincare line of the world-renowned Dr. N.S. Bartleone and members talents, salads are now available at the restaurant. Hot items—fruits salad, okra and body treatments. Sinel I say more, pulangpus.

Pink for Life 2nd charity auction

The super successful fundraiser of Pink for Life Foundation last year has helped almost 300 women afflicted with breast cancer regain new and lives.

At this year's Pink for Life second charity auction, yummy food and beautiful floral arrangements will be provided by Cibo and Fleri di M, no less. Plus wines from Trinita will be free flowing to add more spice to the event. As expected, unusual items and experiences will be up for grabs, dahlings.

Thing unfolded on, check this out! Auction hosts are a weekend stay for two at the Bolgari Resort in Bali paired with a pink Bulgari bag; a helicopter ride around the city and lunch at Circles Sweet Grill of Makati Shangri-La for three people; and a Celestina bag and a gourmet dinner for four from Dimma 1771, paired with a bottle of Bollinger Grand Anee Champagne.

Top bidders will get an Escada gift certificate worth P300,000 with an Awards Ceremal pampering experience, including facials and massages for three people; an overnight stay for four people at the Kilin Shangri-La and relaxing Chi Spa treatments that go with it; special items from Issey Dotta and Ben Valdes Bag; free accommodation for two at the El Nido Lagen Resort; a Josie Natori lingerie; a duo Wacki phone paired with a new magazine of 1966 Vera Wang Grace in wine.

Hey, there's more: such Princess Pam Famil-ia chair, Jesus Acuba painting and Moroccan dinner for eight courtesy of Gigabi Djemal, Ivan Ramsay's high-end Shangri-La is donating a weekend stay for two in one of their fabulous villas.

And Stanford University in California is giving an executive medical checkup for a couple, with a digital mammogram for the women. See the piece de resistance is an oil painting of yellow and pink flowers, as generously donated by former President Cory C. Aquino, no less.

These are all fabulous auction items, given by people and companies who care so much for those with breast cancer. We should all make it a point to go out and bid in order to draw support for such a worthy cause, dahlings.

This is a super must-go and help event to be held tomorrow, May 14, 6 p.m., at the second floor of the Gallery, Greenbelt 5.

I'll see you there, dahlings.

NATHONG Toledo and lawyer Miles Toledo

DRAGO Vanessa, Heidi del Pilar and Phoebe Nieva

LAWYER Vicky Pulliccan, Boni Tenorio and Cora Bueta

GLAM Bayouin, Ijmal's very capable mistress of Paolo Quimson and Antoon Villalona

QUAKE Henares, Karen Jones and Rosie Henares

GLAM Lorenzo and Lucy Riviera and husband Nicholas Gomez

MABO Karighak, treasurer; Ilgabi Djemal, co-chair; Dr. Diana Cua-Bolcoltt, co-chair; Mona Ramos Tanyao, co-chair; Irene Hartal Francisco, chair; and Joy Wiseman, trustee

KYLA, Ice Celeste, Regine Velasquez, Ogie Alcasid, Dr. Vicki Belo and Dr. Hayden Kho

DR. Richelle Ibuna and Josephine Rose del Rosario

ANGELS de Leon and Ara Mina

RAYMART Santiago and wife, gorgeous Claudine Barretto

DAZZLING Alden Richards and Maine Mendoza

CYNTHIA, another Almeria, Orlando Belo Henares, Chona and Pearsia Almeria

ERRATUM. Alex van Hagen took the photos in the Anthony Kiendl-Perry Cojuangco nuptials, which came out in Sunday Lifestyle, May 11. We regret the inadvertent omission of the photo credit.

Six-pack triathlete . . .

[illegible]-#1

your typical P10 base grinder recently, with 250-ml. ceramic bottles for reserve beers and 12- and 22-oz bottles starting at P150.

The collection runs the gamut of flavors from lighter and perhaps more refreshing lagers like the Maiden, Pilsner & Blonde Bock brewed by Gerbel Bausch, to more complex ales like Rolled Porter, edible producers the Guilty Widow Wheat Beer, a really Celtic lember ale and a very hoppy Big Eye India Pale Ale.

Aromatic profiles, "Every one-liter bottle may be consumed by a sampling of our Chocolate Stout, Merlot Porter, Belgium Brown ale & Barley Wine from the highly acclaimed Belgian Ales in Oregon."

Amanita chose the US as source of his beers because his research revealed that due to the country's melting pot culture, its brewing industry is more diverse than other great brewing nations in Europe like Belgium, Germany and the UK.

It also produces unique American Ales, from pilsts happy to extremely hoppy (Stout).

Amanita's plan is to take beers...generally the hot potato's drink of choice—to a whole new level alongside premium wines and top-shelf liquors. We are hoping drinkers will perceive it a bundled of culture that deserves presence.

"I am taking a very conservative approach with distribution because more importantly to me is how the beer is served to the customer. Ideally, I'd like the customers to enjoy the beer the way they do fine wines. I want it to be a feast for the senses with proper glassware, temperature, aroma, mouth feel, etc. and a launched for great conversation," he explains.

Amanita is working with owners and chefs of dining establishments known for good food. He is involved in identifying the most suitable beer and food pairings. The diner must experience the beer and food interaction as a journey.

Food memories

Managing to sell six cases and keeping a six-pack is no mean feat. Amanita can be torn between his love of ale and love of the sea.

"I have always wanted my own brewery, and finally at age 40 I am making this happen. And the best that I also happen to be in better shape now than 20 years ago just makes it all the sweeter," he says.

His love for beer springs from fond memories of his grandfather. "I guess beer has always been special for me because it reminds me of my grandfather. He loved beer. For me, both look towards my divorce with brutal, paper bag in hand, it was bonding time over a six-pack. We hardly needed to speak, it was enough to enjoy a cold one together while watching the news."

Every other Filipino enjoys a "cold one," however, not every Filipino and his mother finishes them. Rarely do drinking alcohol and triathlon training go hand in hand.

Beer enjoyed in moderation a healthy, says Amanita.

"I consider it a pretty good form of carbo-loading. More so with the beer selection of IBUS. Because they are protective structures, that means less calories at 150 per 22-oz serving. They're also fat- and cholesterol-free."

Thus should work well for triathletes who need carbohydrates in bust. So Amanita, all it takes to begin one bottle of beer is an intense 15-minute workout."

When I competed at Ironman Western Australia last year, one of the major sponsors was a beer company. Beer was served at the official pre- and post-race festivities."

The most unfortunate beer drinkers who're not into sports but who want to be in triathlon, can do a brisk one-hour stroll, which is equivalent to "burning" a bottle or two.

"I love that I'm in better shape now in my 40s than any others time in my life," says Amanita. "The Ironman distance triathlon is a race that covers 3.8 km of open-water swimming, 180 km of cycling and a full 42.195 km marathon distance. It took me over 13 hours to complete it; so, it can probably be considered torture. But I do it to stave off a shape, hold off 'Father Time' and, of course, to enjoy my beer without guilt."

AMANITA wants to elevate beer drinking to connoisseurship.

Jen's Races 2007-2008

2007 Ironman Western Australia Tri
2007 Whitsunday Half Ironman Tri
2007 IU Double Olympic Distance Tri
2007 IM Olympic Distance Tri
2007 Ayala Anthony Quest Tri
2007 National Triathlon Championship Qualifier Tri
2007 Beer Between 25-km run
2008 Subic to Clark Expressway 120-km cycling race
2008 HRC Team Time Trials
2008 Pandora Race to Tabiabitan 10-km run
2008 Mizuno Run 45-km run

Stages of successful weight loss

By Mitch Felipe
Contributor

I HAVE CLOSELY WORKED WITH CLIENTS who experienced difficulties during and after the weight loss process, and I've observed a consistent pattern in their thought and actions that could either make or break their efforts.

Dr. Daniel Kirschenbaum explains why a weight controller behaves at different stages of weight control in his book "Weight Loss Through Persistence." The complete process might last for a year or more, depending on how a person fares each stage.

Stage 1: Honeymoon

You have a noticeably high level of motivation. You can regularly write down your food intake and exercise, and you can lose from 5 to 7 pounds every week.

■ Use a journal in monitoring food intake and exercise habits.

■ Avoid high-impact activities that may cause strain and injuries.

■ Stay away from diets that will make you easily give up on your weight loss goals.

Stage 2: Frustration

After losing a large amount of weight, you might decide to rest and reward yourself with foods you've always wanted to eat.

■ You can have a break but continue doing the weight loss strategies you learned during the honeymoon stage.

■ Talk to friends or people who've also experienced this stage and ask tips on how they were able to overcome this period.

Stage 3: Tentative acceptance

Enjoy physical activities as part of your daily routine. But whatever you want, but in moderation.

■ Get educated on exercises you can do anytime, anywhere like walking, home exercises and outdoor sports.

Stage 4: Shock and ambivalence

After the long process, you might look for quick fixes.

■ Stick to sensible and realistic weight control program principles.

Stage 5: Fear of success

Dr. Kirschenbaum explained that there are rare instances when even weight controllers sabotage their own efforts by, minute they suddenly become afraid of becoming thin.

■ Learn to appreciate yourself as someone who is healthy, strong and fulfilled.

Stage 6: Lifestyle change

There is commitment about yourself, weight, eating and exercise behaviors.

■ Find more challenging activities like running, swimming, cycling or tennis.

E-mail the author at mitchfelipe@gmail.com

How to become an Ironman

1. Apologize. Recognizing that others' college is over and for most people their means competitive sports is over. Families are starved, while work and kids take the focus. Physical deconditioning sets in. Time to find a challenge that will tell us if the belly and gut some spring back into your step.

2. Set a goal. The first goal must be achievable. The satisfaction of accomplishing an objective is key to sustainable physical activity. A sprint **triathlon is the answer.** Normally these races are around 500-m swim, 20-km bike, and 5-km run, and achievable for anyone. Check out the website of the Triathlon Federation of the Philippines (www.ptaa.com) for schedule of races. Speed does not matter, but some preparatory training is very helpful.

Three different sports give you a variety of physical activities and minimize the chance of injury. Pick a race that is suitable.

3. Start of training. Start off with three workouts per week: one workout in the pool, one on the bike, and another is running workout. Adopt a run/walk strategy—two five minutes three-walk five minutes, repeating the cycle for about one hour. **Remember...it is** about finishing and not going as fast as you can. Try to increase the number of workouts to five per week with two rest days. Keep the sessions to somewhere between 45 minutes and an hour.

4. The first race: Enjoy the process [illegible]. Your main competition is yourself. Focus on completing each segment...and before you end, do it...you are a triathlete! The first major goal has been reached. So the next goal, an Olympic distance triathlon—1500-m swim, 40-km on the bike, 10-km run. You are now hitting by the bug.

5. Building towards an Ironman. From this point on, it is all about increasing the training to remember between 10 and 15 hours per week, getting more race experience by joining more Olympic distance and half Ironman races. The pounds are coming off and you are feeling stronger. Remember that an Ironman is a 3800-m swim, 180-km on the bike, and 42.2-km run. You will learn about healthy food choices, hydration requirements, pros and natural carbo-loaders, and about your self, mentally and physically. Even better, you have made many new friends.

6. Finishing the Ironman race: It is impossible to explain the jubilation of arriving at the finishing chute of a race. You will have arrived in the finishers.

7. Who to contact? The website of Tbay is a good start to know the triathlon and duathlon activities in the Philippines. In Manila there are the 10-k Tri Team, Fitness First Triathlon Team, Speed Triathlon Team.

My 'MRI' moment

By Margie Cantil-Collins
Contributor

The neurosurgeon was saying softly to me, 'It'll be necessary to determine whether or not it's cancerous'

LONDON—"SEE THE mirror there?"

This stupidstupidstupid friend mate, my considered neurosurgeon, was saying calmly to me, pointing to a film of my spine. "Have to arrange for MRI of your brain and spinal cord."

His eyes are the blue of the Atlantic. "It will be necessary to take the tumor out to determine whether or not it's cancerous."

He has strong hands. I could meander a cup of tea "fetching a handkerchief with you next time."

Guess not indeed off entirely. The man in white coats will have to resize me off the ceiling. What did he say? What cancer?

Take Triple Take Flight. I hopped to be somewhere else, somewhere not here. Maybe I was rapidly going inside myself, too instinctively and the very dark night of my soul. The possibility and absolutely of dying young when there are so many things I have yet to do. Worries!

Dear Mr. Master? Why can't God be held to account? I need a rope let down from heaven to rescue me. Will I be happy again? Or should the memory of were being happy be enough? Dating for worse, preferably of nothing to do with a children's rodeo.

Calm me! Still, if not me, who? The nothing special, not like Craig Venter, who maps human genomics, or Professor Higgs with his God's particle of interest. My lovely sister says I should pray. Yeha, and there I think of the miserable, tortured, stubborn-willed people in our town Gospo, Darling, Rwanda. I feel like a head, when everyone else is fighting a little harder than mine. How can He hear my prayed, outcasters others He's visibly gone deaf?

Bucket list

Gasp for breath. I vow to Dana my existentialist philosophically, like a Zen disciple amused to the sound of one hand clapping from a distance. If you Real yourself Dancing Hands, Left Chase Ball, and Dandelion, keep going.

I never gracefully or when people's healthy lives. Make up my "bucket list" of things I want or need to do before kicking the bucket, it requires water the mind wonderfully.

Thanks Dana, for the blessed gift of being alive. I listen to the friendly cardio of timber in the house and worry dear then my eldest pleasures are now so simple and realist. Reading in bed late at night, seeking solace within the pages of a book. Or watching the sun send muddy fields. A favorite Brunello with a long finish and warm hazards of Africa we home's leaving chill and fit or of colors. Rose-scented, non-apartment. English: sunset afternoons. Movie. Oysters and champagne or La Grenouille. Russia. The Swiss Alps, an excuse to learn to ski. Remembering the face once I held eyes on and fell to love with my newborn son.

What is this world without awe and wonder? Will I miss these things I'm going? Do the dead miss anything?

Tidy up my chattels and affairs—but will and testament, gifts and bequests, doubt to the house, investments and bank details. "I don't know much about being a millionaire," Dorothy Parker said, "but I bet I'd be a darling at it."

Will he miss me?

My girlfriends and I don't have one bond from another. I think our women are bountifully wise and wonderful. Intimately connected. Sisters, and then it's too late.

Must explain these to my son and kids; the bills to be paid—gas, electricity, water...the demise of daily life. He will wake up one day and I won't be there. It will be like navigating an empty, voiceless room. Feeling the uneven pebbles underneath his feet before he can come to safety on the other side. Will he miss me?

"There bodily things remind me of you."

What will take those away? Memories when I'm gone, which memories will outer the ghosts? The smell of fresh-cut flowers, scones once full of laughter, his mother's perfume, love letters, reading faces in other homes, sunsets from exotic places, prayers being answered. I like to dream of these. Will he forgive me; judge me grave-ready or not the forgiveness of his heart?

I'm back in hospital. It's mildly reassuring to know it's a world-class teaching hospital and neurologist is one of their specialties. Remind myself I'm in good hands. Oh no; did I wear my best underwear? Does it matter?

Memories

Nigel, the radiologist, calls me later. "We'll do your brain first. This scanner is open-ended, only those weeks old, we know you were coming," he teases in reference.

Stanzas rises in my gorge. I ask for music and lend plaintive and Nigel puts on Satie. I close my eyes and let the sounds.

I feel trapped in a Munch painting, sounding chords of time, screaming objects, distressing and shaking a tone bells and I can't touch it or see. The whole past swallowed inside a vehicle. Progress into an hourglass and then back forgiveness...from family, friends, loved ones, my "I love you" without reservation, perhaps for the last time.

I close my eyes and imagine a black slate chiseled with a constellation of stars. The long minutes glide like leaves in a slow dance. My mind expands to the past, a country I've come to visit for the umpteenth time.

Here I have a good parents, wife and mother. A book, a comfort to others? Can I look back on my days with a little pleasure? What have I done with my life? Measured it out with coffee spoons? Wasted it wishing and wishing for another life to happen? What if there are the good old days?

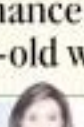
After nearly an hour of this, "We'll do your spine now, Okay?" Nigel says. Oh, gosh. There is no hurry; we will get there in the end. I'm observing so much Nigel make me to blankets. Afraid to die, don't want to. Have yet more to make a deal with God—to breathe life and health back into me.

I think Nigel, my amiable executioner, got back into my clothes and with out of King's College Hospital where really nice people go, to let me live.

The world didn't stop, but it feels like a different sort of same. A kind sight escapes me. I let out a prayer. I urge a young girl, pale and frail, she cannot her face up to the sky, like a lead flowering in warm spring sunshine. She has hope.

How to enhance energy of 37-year-old woman

INSIDE OUT
GARY ZUKAV



There are no quick fixes

THERE ARE NO QUICKIE remedies. There are only responses rooted in a change of soul, look and lifestyle.

Here are answers to some of your questions in the hope that you'll be guided to healthier life.

I am a 37-year-old woman with an active life. What can you recommend to enhance my energy level?

At 37, your target must reconcile your higher desires, needs (eg what you eat is paramount. Your metabolism after 30 slows down, so you must exert more to burn fat.

If it's energy you want, cut out junk food from your diet to at least cut back. Get nutritional rest/sleep. Load up on vegetables and fruit (preferably berries and tomatoes), fish, beans, brown rice). Remove all the white stuff (bread, pasta). Cut back on sweets (especially at night). Exercise burns energy.

Before a workout, take Brain vitamins (Centrum) + B6, C, cod-liver, magnesium, amino acids. These will provide you with a safe recommendation of minerals, replenishment of nutrients lost through sweating.

Make it a habit to eat raw fruits, raw tomato (preferably salsa) before an exercise. It will boost your energy levels. Have Hemy moderate could also get a little help from one cup of coffee for your tea. But observe it, enjoy what you are doing. And smile through the day.

I am a teacher in a public school. And my problem is the ability to concentrate. Any suggestion to increase my brain power?

The brain is the master control center of our body. Therefore, train your mind at all times, Focus on the task at hand. Give yourself quiet time to engage your brain cell by starting out the garbage your head currently.

Secondly, do not enter a classroom on an empty stomach. Studies have shown that skipping a meal depletes the brain of glucose, which otherwise have come from your breakfast. So start the day with a good meal.

Third, some supplements may help you—B complex 50 mg (a.m. and p.m.), calcium 1500 mg (6.00, and p.m.), magnesium 1000 mg (a.m. and p.m.), multivitamin mineral supplement. Other brain enhancing foods: fish (tuna, sardines, mackerel) and peanuts.

As a golfer, how can I improve my performance?

Golf is all in the head—it starts every athlete. But golfing can take a lot out of you—time and energy. Even if these supplements may not get you down to the ideal seventies, they could help you stay on top of the game all the way to the 18th hopefully avoid mind blocks by taking after a mental lozenge when you have absorbed this way. Take one multivitamin/mineral supplement, B complex (50mg/a.m. and p.m.), zinc (15-30mg/day), calcium 600 mg, magnesium 250 mg.

Energy tonic

2 fresh ripe bananas
1/4 c freshly cooked old-fash
1 c whole milk (optional)
1 tsp honey
Mix in blender. Drink up.

What is the best skin treatment you can recommend?

The best is still proper exercise all because it makes you look healthier. Drink 1-4 cups on an empty stomach. Within one month of drinking it, you'll notice that your skin is smoother, less prone to breakouts. Use it as a wash.

Body scrub

½ c sugar (non-granule, brown)
2 tbsp virgin coconut oil
½ lemon, juiced

Mix well. Scrub throughout your body—head to foot (mainly the rough areas). Once a week is enough to give you smooth skin.

Caution: Do not use lemon scrub solution on any known or thought to be open wounds. Never cook any dishes during the labor!

According to Dr. Gary Zukav in his book "The Heart of the Soul," there are only two routes you can enter to the classroom of life—love or fear. If you are not loving, you are fearful. Enter the room of love instead. Your choice will immediately transform your outlook. Encourage your heart to feel. Then all fear every night before bedtime and every morning upon awakening: "All is well; let Great Heaven is in my heart."

Love and light!

Reference: Earl Mindell's "Vitamin Bible for the 21st Century"

E-mail the author at yoryaker@hotmail.com

A classic psychic powers book

Part I

INNER AWARENESS
Janne S Jasmin

IN THE FIRST PRINTING OF THE BOOK, I asked a lady friend if she could pose naked for the book. And out of fun, she agreed to do it...provided her face would not be shown and that her identity would not be revealed. I asked well-known photographer Tech Andiseo to take the photo and the rest was history.

The book has since become a classic in the field and a book gathering dust now.

What the book had such staying power may be attributed to the following factors:

First, it fulfilled a hunger of the Filipino public for unbiased and credible answers to many questions regarding psychic experiences that could not be explained by either science or religion.

Second, it was written in a very simple and easily understood language. Even elementary and high-school students could read the book and understand it. Every new word I used was explained simply and with examples. I even provided a glossary of terms at the end of the book.

Third, I found out that some professors of psychology and English literature in several Manila colleges, like Centro Escolar University of the Philippines and Philippine Christian College in Las Piñas, recommended the book as collateral reading material to their students. One female student also required her students to read my column in the newspaper and discussed it in class.

Many graduate began to write letters to papers and ask for the book to be printed or for their school requirements. And teachers were encouraging such research on these subjects because they themselves were interested in them.

I also discovered later that the book could be found in most school libraries all over the Philippines. My children and I are my parents all soldiered to find the book in their school libraries, to my great surprise.

The influence the book has had on the lives of many was simply incredible and really unexpected.

One female doctor, for example, told me in the late '80s that the book saved her from being confined in the mental hospital.

How? She said she was having strange psychic experiences she could not understand and which no medical specialist could explain. She was seeing spirits and hearing voices. She thought she was going crazy, then she read the book and learned there were other people who possessed such powers. It didn't mean they were bad/frightening. She found out she was not crazy and that she was not alone. She opened up to her family and friends and found out that many of them had similar experiences but were afraid to talk about them because they thought they would be ridiculed.

Another person/story on a very interesting story of how he got hold of my book. He was a book dealer and buyer of old newspapers and magazines. One day he saw a small book among the pile of old newspapers. In every bad/ruinously house/store, but he got curious and started reading it. He found the subject matter very interesting. It was my book "Understanding the Psychic Powers of Mine." He was so fascinated by the book that he said he used it over and over again. When he read my name in the newspaper with my address, he decided to see me so he will return how he found the book, naming the old newspapers he was about to sell. He thanked me for the knowledge he had acquired about the subject.

When the book ceased to be published in 1990, people still kept looking for it. It became a collector's item. Some who wanted to have a complete collection of all my books, which after 20 years number 12, had the first book photocopied. One of those who found my works so fascinating that he had to have a complete collection was the former Nigerian Ambassador to the Philippines, Dada Olusi. Another was a Russian banker and researcher named Yuri Volkov, who also had the original book photocopied.

In other words providing from my publishers and friends, I decided to revise and update the book for those who never had a chance to read the first book on writers in this field by a Filipino author. Now this book will soon be available in all branches of National Book Store and PowerBooks.

Note: For information on books, seminars and personal consultancy provided by the Inner Mind Development Institute, please call 8187265 or 8926806, or e-mail innermind_2000@yahoo.com.ph.

Manila Doctors offers Family-Affair-to-Trim (FAT) Busters Program

CAUTION: DIET FRUIT DIET. No-carbs diet. You've heard about these quick-fix diets. But how do you tell legitimate weight loss plans from diets that don't work (at least in the long run)?

While these fad diets result in weight loss, as they are basically low-calorie diets, the excess weight is more likely to come back.

Fortunately, Perpetual Obesity Hypertension, Endocrine Abnormalities and Lifestyle Theatre in Health (Project HOBIT), with Manila Doctors College, has launched Family-Affair-to-Trim (FAT) Busters Program.

It focuses on medically-tailored eating plans based on desired weight-loss needs, lifestyle, and medical conditions, and a nutritional plan that details the correct balance of food groups to maximize personal weight-loss goals. Support and guidance on weight loss are done through one-on-one counseling by Per-Health's Genius. The patient's progress is monitored by the HOC Clinic.

Level 1 and 2 students of MDC, who need nutrition and diet counseling services, are identified based on the results of the annual physical exams at HOBIT. Diet help and a nutritional program are then structured based on the individual's lifestyle. All counseling sessions are conducted by registered dietitians.

FAT Busters nutrition counseling aims to help develop programs that meet the dietary and nutritional needs of MDC employees (staff and faculty) by offering counseling, individual and group weight-loss programs, diabetes control programs, etc.

Aside from the reduced fat nutrition and diet and counseling sessions, FAT Busters programs also provides self-help education modules and support via fitness programs. A team of dietitians and physical education instructors are tapped. (The program is P2,000.)

For inquiries, call Manila Doctors College at (02) 6109580 or visit www.mdc.edu.ph.

ENTERTAINMENT

Tyler Brenzo C. Velarde

Buboy, Shine take a romantic cruise

CESAR MONTANO, SUSAhlene Cruz and their three daughters were spotted at Rivermarch's Floating Resto in Bohol. They were cruising along Loboc river. In fact a sign that should not be put on a river because of all the romance. Indeed na Bohol?

Hmm. Guess just Mother's Day sentiments. "My Mama rules (pun on a guitar for my 18th birthday) I haven't stopped playing the guitar since. Long before I learned to love acting, music was already my passion. Thanks to my Mom for awakening the musician in me." Is he back to strumming Shine's joy with his fingers and singing their life with his vocals?

Here and there

Bobby Consuegra can one thing but does another. Initial plans to reunite with Juliana Magdangal flicked out because he changed his mind at the last minute. Here Gabe insists he still wants to do a movie with Glaiza. But according to Juliana' dad, Tito Jun Magdangal, she is not sure. Even Gabe right not believing in his own hype.

Marriage works

RICHARD and Lucy Gomez are living proof that those tie knot lines can work. What were their 10th anniversary gifts to each other? "We are not big on presents on special occasions," says Lucy. "Instead we surprise each other with thoughtful gifts on ordinary days." More romantic moments together! "We have to pick it." she says thinking. "Our first kiss, the night of my 22nd b-day when he proposed to me, on the thanksgiving session where I told him I was pregnant with Juliana." A mixture memories, and still counting.

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

Sexiest Greek

MIRIAM Quiambao had the time of her life in Greece when she featured in "Three Men's World." Her Greek host guide Nicolas tried to have steady sex obviously using his wife for "the wants to wear sex for a chic" relates Miriam "Guys relax steps out of town but, sorry, guys DP ang 'yon (laughs)." I heard that "they separated because [an Italian] friend, who you know a friend admirer! Boys your love life is da Mi Universe 'cause your talent have different personalities!" We both had a good laugh. Then Miriam turned positive "Makitapo ang bang dimension sa season 3 i-spesyal sayuell for you! when I bwelcome thing.

CESAR Montano with wife Sandra Cruz and kids at Bohol

Now Debra

MARRIED to now Debra—now mature, now mixed. League (reader loads the goods with unsecured loans, dear Ali Gmanie). Husband (boss) and dear ex (ouch). The finish. Bet single, "Inside." is her becoming a radio favorite. Coming up soon, Debra's debut...cute good album, which is set for release very soon.

E-mail: entertainment@inquirer.net@yahoo.com

FILIPINIZER. Jewel Mardoquio assembled a highly competent cast from Davao City's theater folk, including children who blended confidently with the adult performers. The movie is an advocacy project of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart Youth Ministry.

A Mindanao film for the nation

By Rommendie Lumbres
National Center for Literature

"EARTH'S WHISPER," THE English translation of "Tinagbong sa Yuta"—the title of Award Mardoquio's film about war and peace in Mindanao—easily runs as one hour to read the story about a church of dead, many children in a mysterious community consisting of Christians, Muslims and Lumads, and the teacher from the city who befriends them in the village and endears them to the military has devastated the community of Biawak, to most telling casualty being children from without the ability to speak and hear, and whose fathers are nevertheless known to training them to become fighters to defend their land.

Wijo Cruz, artist and toy-maker answers a pointed notice about Biawak's need for a teacher, and his work with the children brings joy and hope to the young war victims and their mothers.

REVIEW **Symbolic turn**

Mardoquio's screenplay weaves together with realism and symbolism the many contradictions and complexities that the war has imposed on the community. The soldiers have gone by the Manila government to the jungles of Mindanao to declare the rebels or pin the demands of politicians and businessmen who want peace so their interest and business could prosper. The communities are forced to take up arms to defend their farms and homes. With hundreds more) as guerrilla fighters, the mothers find themselves taking sides in the war, suspicious of strangers who come into their midst—until Wijo comes to Biawak and presents himself as a teacher to their children. Thus, armed with the schools and numbers, the children become powerful able to get back at an alternative to their orderly fashioned treaties (or pacts. Here Mardoquio's narrative takes a symbolic turn.

Having achieved their identity as persons, the children are on their way to discovering the bond that integrates them as members of one community. This is documented in their

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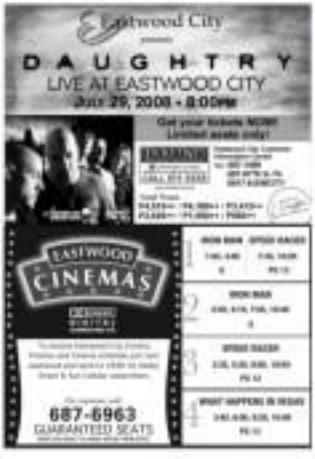

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SPEED RACER

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1 IRON MAN	3 SPEED RACER
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1 IRON MAN	3 FORBIDDEN KINGDOM
2 WHEN LOVE BEGINS	4 SPEED RACER

DASMARIÑAS

1 IRON MAN	3 SPEED RACER
2 WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS	4 WHEN LOVE BEGINS

IMUS

1 WHEN LOVE BEGINS	3 SPEED RACER
2 IRON MAN	4 WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS

ANGELES

1 IRON MAN	3 SPEED RACER
2 WHEN LOVE BEGINS	4 STREET KINGS

STARMILLS

1 STREET KINGS	4 POSSESSED
2 WHEN LOVE BEGINS	5 IRON MAN
3 FORBIDDEN KINGDOM	6 SPEED RACER

BACOLOD

1 IRON MAN	5 SUPERHERO MOVIE
2 SHUTTER / SPEED RACER	6 FORBIDDEN KINGDOM
3 WHEN LOVE BEGINS	
4 FORBIDDEN KINGDOM	
5 HAFS ISLAND	
6 3000 PRO	

ILOILO

1 SPEED RACER	5 IRON MAN
2 WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS	6 SUPERHERO MOVIE
3 WHEN LOVE BEGINS	7 FORBIDDEN KINGDOM
4 IRON MAN	

Too many 'sponsored features' on TV

Nestor U. Torre

What rankles is the deception; this is a betrayal of viewers' trust

MORE FROM TED MANN commercials, advertisers those days are burdened with having to watch "sponsored features." These are minutes-long features that purport to shed light on an (otherwise) topic, but in fact are extended plugs for a person, product, service or organization.

What rankles is the deception. Program hosts plainly declare that they're sharing this information because it's interesting or important, but it soon out that the feature is paid for in cash or in kind by its sponsoring individual or organization.

This is a betrayal of viewers' trust because, in accepting payment for a sponsored feature, the TV program gives up its editorial objectivity, and every penny concentrates on making the featured service or product look good to viewers.

Another element that rankles is the fact that sponsored features aren't rationed to the 18 minutes per TV hour that have been set as the limit for TV commercials. So, with sponsored features, viewers' non-commercial programs runs is further limited. So much for some TV people's professed devotion to the viewing public....

Why do some programs qualify for "sponsored features"? Because of the extra income they generate — some of which, by the way may not go to the producers, but to the "facilitating" program hosts, instead.

The biggest disappointment is the fact that some sponsored features find their way into programs that involve some well-known people in the broadcast industry. Again, we touch the admirable conduct on TV.

We're writing about this controversy for the past few months, we've noted an increase in the number of sponsored features on quite a number of TV shows. Are local viewers really clueless about this? They should complain, because this practice further cuts into the non-commercial programs time they deserve to enjoy.

What are the telltale signs that the "important" or "interesting" feature you're watching is in fact an extended plug or puff piece? First, it deals, not with a trend, but with a specific product or service provider. Or else, it may exist not in general terms, but is quickly becomes apparent that the process of making a product is being detailed, not really to inform, but to rave about the "high-quality" of the product being featured.

When the topic is an individual or organization, the host/s keeps building up the sponsor as glowingly that its fawning matters soon becomes itself. And, always, the befuddled viewers keep asking, "aside from making this person or group look great, what's the point to all this?" When, indeed?

One of the worst offenders as far as sponsored features are concerned turns out to be little more than one puff piece after another. Sadly, viewers can see the pesos signs all over the place!

Other programs may have sold a bill of goods. With sponsored features, you're being sold something in the guise of objective information.

Now, that definitely isn't on the up-and-up, and viewers should learn when they're being had.

DID YOU KNOW...

ATA ARUMBAYA REPRISES THE ROLE OF former child star Gary Coleman in Atlantis Productions' version of the Broadway musical "Avenue Q" at the Esplanade Theatre in Singapore in October. Meanwhile, Bagamo enjoys the same role one less time in the play's final Manila run on June 13-22, at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium, BCSC (Pasay, Makati. Call/SMS: 9393.and.840-1207.

SHANG CINEPLEX

1 Speed Racer
1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00

2 Iron Man
1:40, 4:30, 7:10, 10:00

3 Iron Man
12:40, 3:30, 6:10, 8:50

4 What Happens in Vegas
10:30, 2:40, 5:00, 7:20, 9:40

Speed Racer
12:00, 2:00, 5:40, 8:20

Shang Cineplex E-see Club

Power Plant Cinema

Ironman – G
Speed Racer – PG13
Ironman – G
What Happens in Vegas – PG13
Deception PG13
Speed Racer PG13

MMTA MOVIE GUIDE
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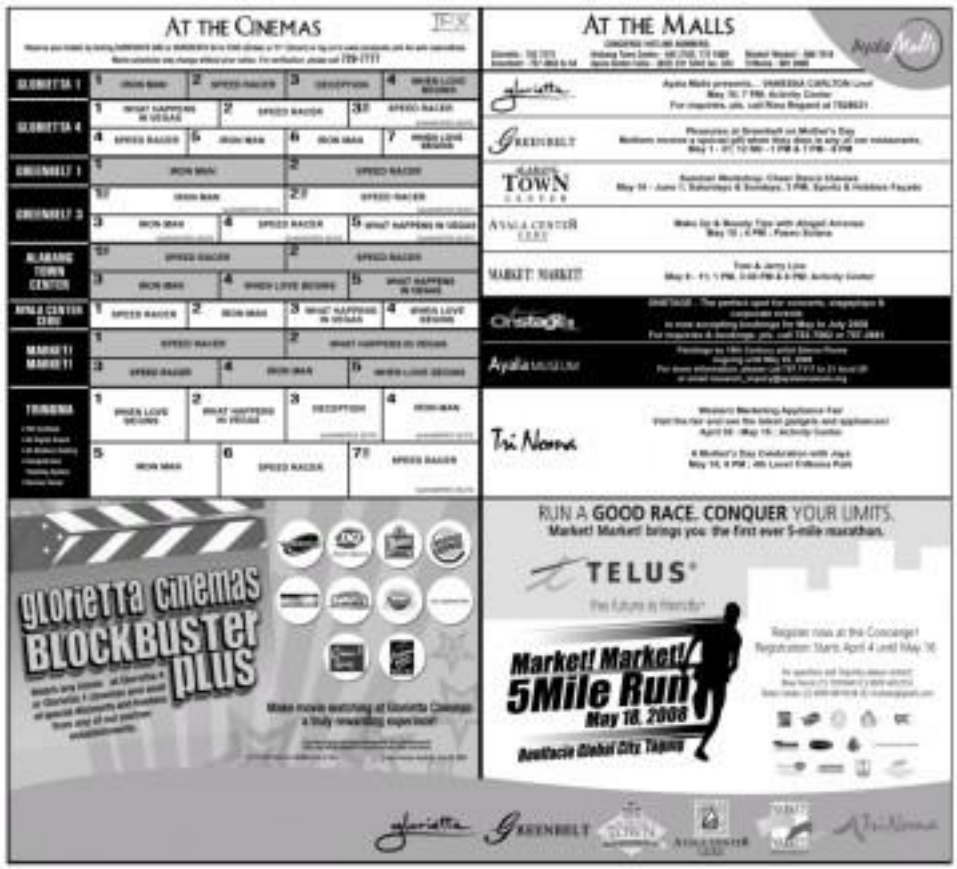
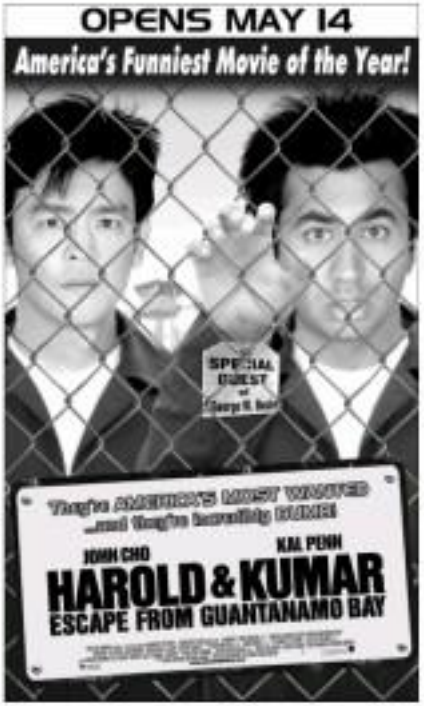
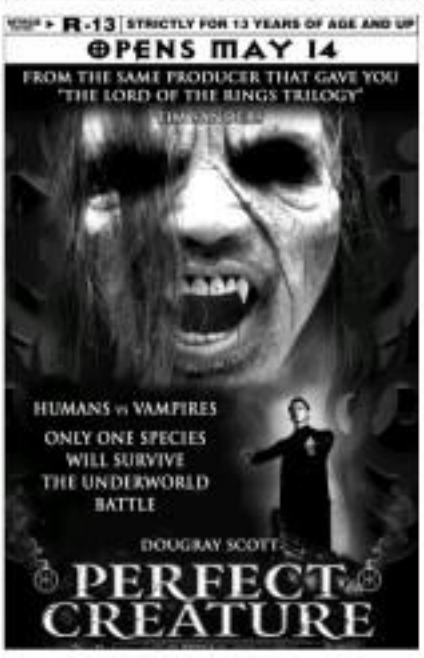






MOTHERS are forced to take risks in the war

A Mindanao film...

From page D1

recovery of brass instruments that the war had caused to be abandoned to a stream. Following a massacre of villagers, the day of making music is disrupted by the revelation that Teofi, a man assumed to be a rebel leader, turns out to be a soldier spying on the community. The deaths that ensue bring on [illegible] and [illegible] of men. Not against are the lives of men of goodwill such as Vigo, the tribal woman leader facing bigger, the intrepid fighter Wahab, the resolute Amoyela.

Advocacy

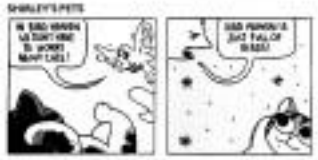
An advocacy project of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart Youth Ministry under the leadership of Bro. Nardo Delorio SC, "Hanghang" is part of what its producers tentatively as a "mobile peace education campaign." What distinguishes it from the usual advocacy project is the [illegible] care given by the director and his staff, and the passion and excellence of the talented project. Most despite an director has assembled a highly competent cast from Davao City theater folk that includes Nelson Dino, Lucie Gipa, Jean Mae Sano, Hyping Landero, Marie Locder Lim and Caroline Lim. The child actors Jaymar Generoso and Marvin Mindog confidently blend with the adult performers.

Miraculous

Of the technical staff assisting Mordequin, commendable is the work of the cinematographer Pipay Navarro whose [illegible] achieves some with a single high-density digital camera currently be described as miraculous. As film editor, Arthur Ian Garcia provides Navarro superior assistance in turning out a smooth but dynamic narrative flow for the film, in spite of the limited imagery captured by only one camera. Composer Pepong Landero has provided music that hauntingly captures the ethnic atmosphere of Hanguk and its culture.

Certainly, "Hanghang in Ta'ta" is a Davao film that richly deserves to be seen nationwide.

SHIRLEY'S PETS — BY ROBERT MACKLASON



A. LIPIN — BY JOSS ABRERA

TULDOK — BY PATU AND TATUM HILARIBILING

PUGAD BABOY — BY Im Jumolo

DIVINE COMEDY — BY ETHAN PABALINAS

GARFIELD — By Jim Davis

SALAMIN — BY SARAH'S PEREZ

BABY BLUES — BY JERRY SCOTT

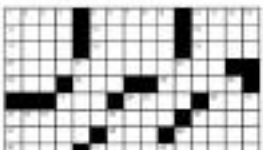
ATCHOO AND WEEDY — BY LIRA GARCILLANO

LOWBROWS — BY ELIZABETH CHOKKLO

KIKO MACHINE — BY MANO ABRERA

BEN — BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Stanley B. Mirasol
Highwood, IL

ACROSS
1 Cooking measure
6 Cleaner
10 Ill-tempered
14 Ascertain
15 Sprinkled topped
marmalade
17 Chop down?
18 Limestone
material
19 Drive it over
20 TV news
personality
22 Anatomical
passage
24 Cinderella
25 One way to be
taken
27 Party with
entertainment
29 Electricity
30 TV comedy
31 TV news
personality
35 Odd
36 Globe fixation
37 Hydrocarbons,
e.g.
38 Period
39 Portends
40 Haughtiness
41 TV news
personality
42 ___ cocktails
44 Bachelorette
46 Fabric and
blanket
48 Ice rink sport
49 Pay-per-view
50 Cow neighbors
51 TV news
personality
56 ___ verde
(Puerto Rico)
57 Creamy soup
58 Plasma
59 Pertaining to
60 Fabled
62 Eye abnormality
63 Angel
64 Bedtime
65 ___ Grove
(Portland
attraction)

DOWN
1 Lucid's opposite
2 Queen
Charlotte's
3 Cleveland's river
4 ___ Lanka

5 Pieces for
edges
6 Cash
7 Nervous
8 Convalescent
utilized
9 Improvement
10 Punctuation
mark
11 Bowled people
12 Water Department
13 Dirt
21 Commanded
23 Tummy
muscles
26 Prepared to be
married
27 Talks tongue
28 To the point
29 Work of G.I. Joe
31 Rear pendant
32 Wooden rivet
33 Hotel rooming
34 Date seed
(spelled
backward)
35 Hook's foe
36 Sounds of
applause
38 Some god of
poetry
41 Lose one's shape
42 Some alarms
44 Dazed
45 Plum skin
46 Presidential vote
48 Ceremonial knife
49 Approximately
(slang)
51 Chicken's
mountain range
52 Ella Lola's
Pizza
54 Singer
Lauderdale
55 Smudge
57 Take measures
58 Letter drop

Monday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

Find some balance between the heavy and lighter moods of your sign and you'll be more in control of your destiny. Some of you have the gift of prophecy. Whatever you appreciate life today, you're extremely romantic—even dreamy—and you're ready to fall in love. Birthdays: Actress Jessica Alba (1981). Blocked, actress Hillary Swank (1974). Actor Jon Cryer (1965).

ARIES (March 21 to April 20): You could be in for a surprise today. Some friend or associate wants to get closer than you'd like. If you can find solitude in beautiful surroundings, take advantage of it. Enjoy nature and the peace it brings. Avoid loud, noisy places. Stay away from crowds.

TAURUS (April 21 to May 21): It's a powerful friend today. Some influential person wants to connect with you. Be careful not to get involved in any political changes that are good for you, good for others or both.

GEMINI (May 22 to June 21): You have a chance to improve your image in the world today. Be alert to this. Use gratitude, compassion, patience, kindness and consideration in your interactions. Be sincere.

CANCER (June 22 to July 23): Your appreciation of beauty is heightened today. Visit parks, galleries, museums, concerts and theaters and enjoy your surroundings. Talk to people from different cultures.

LEO (July 24 to Aug. 23): You might run into someone from your past today. Be careful. Some unpleasant memories could be stirred up. Don't let anyone take away your happiness. Be sensitive to others' emotions.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 to Sept. 23): Be careful not to become a slave to your job today. Stay focused on the important things in life. Don't get caught up in the trivial. Be sure to spend time with your family.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 to Oct. 23): You can be very persuasive today. Use your charm to get what you want. Be careful not to be too pushy. Be sensitive to others' feelings. Be considerate.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 to Nov. 22): Emotions are intense today. Be careful not to overreact to anyone. Don't get into arguments. Be sensitive to others' feelings. You're in the mood for fun! Any single love seeks connections. If you are involved, plan a special evening.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 to Dec. 21): You're extremely romantic today. Be careful not to overdo it. Don't let your self-control get away from you. Be careful not to overindulge in anything. Be sensitive to others' feelings.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 20): You're extremely romantic today. Be careful not to overdo it. Don't let your self-control get away from you. Be careful not to overindulge in anything. Be sensitive to others' feelings.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 to Feb. 19): Don't overdo your spending today. Stay within your budget. Be careful not to overindulge in anything. Be sensitive to others' feelings. Be considerate.

PISCES (Feb. 20 to March 20): You don't need to be somebody else today. Be yourself. Don't compare yourself to others. Be sensitive to others' feelings. Be considerate. Be careful not to overindulge in anything.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — By Dave Green

		4	7				2	
			1	4	2			5
6						1		
3	8						4	
	4			2			7	
	2						5	3
		5						6
8			4	6	9			
	6				1	8		

Difficulty Level ★★

6:11

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

1	6	7	2	4	8	9	3	5
2	5	4	1	9	3	8	7	6
8	9	3	7	5	6	2	4	1
6	1	8	3	7	5	4	2	9
5	7	9	4	1	2	3	6	8
3	4	2	8	6	9	1	5	7
4	8	1	5	2	7	6	9	3
9	3	5	6	8	4	7	1	2
7	2	6	9	3	1	5	8	4

'Happilieve' married man

LOS ANGELES—ASHTON KUTCHER says a champion can never smell the sort his wife, actor Demi Moore, five years ago and become a changed man. "I never really thought I would get married," Kutcher told reporters. "Now I am the happiliest—I think I just invented that word—married guy on the planet."

Reuters

CHEER FACTOR

'What Happens in Vegas': Conditional love, short-lived honeymoon

By Oliver H. Palanca
Contributor

A DOUBLE WEDDING LEADS TO A regrettable morning after, in the raucous, seven-sign love-hate rom-com "What Happens in Vegas." This time, what happens in Vegas doesn't stay there, as a boozers painfully close to two mortifying strangers who impulsively tie the knot after a night of non-stop partying. It's exactly what its trailer promises: it paints much excitement from predictably wasted—and chuckingly rude—antics.

But it's not without some good laughs. "What Happens in Vegas" executes its situational humor decently from certain that depict mind-gender battles to those that portray cynical, relationship blunders.

REVIEW

Don't expect anything profound or clever, as it doesn't stray too far from the pronouncers of the conventional comedy or romance flick. It's light, sometimes shallow, but it's an easy watch.

ASHTON Kutcher and Cameron Diaz

Doomed

Cameron Diaz plays Joy, a competitive career woman who's a downer when it comes to her relationship with an unsuccessful boss, Simon (Jason Sudeikis). After the cringe-inducing beverage, she flies to Las Vegas for a change of scenery, and it can into Jack (Ashton Kutcher), a charming and unfocused businessmaker with problems of his own. They hit it off quick, but they don't remember much from the night before. They freak out when they realize their mistake—and think getting incompatibility.

But the newlyweds win millions of dollars, and they want to fare in fighting over it. Sentenced to "six months hard marriage" by a judge (Dennis Miller), who wants them to understand the consequences of their rash actions, Jack and Joy pretend to get along for the sake of their financial security.

Of course, they whip up inventive plots to discredit each other, to the offended party will be rewarded the entire cash prize. They spread news of their "honeymoon" causing devious pleas, pulling them into each other's nudity-related stag rackets to the process.

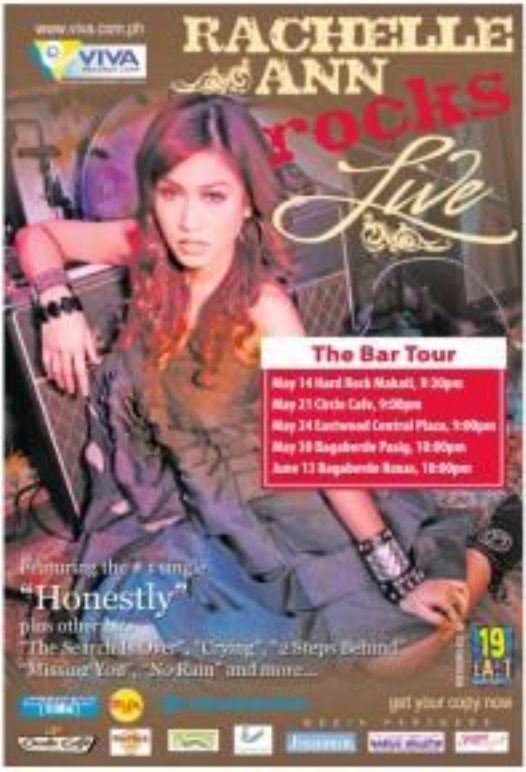
Kutcher's part seems like a mellower extension of his "That '70s Show" character, while his obvious pranks automatically remind you of his "Punk'd" TV show. He's in his element, obviously, but he's made to look like a likeable lousy customer who'll attract a similarly nasty and unsure partner like Joy.

Not so subtle

That pitching keeps this not-so-subtle comedy quite bearable. Diaz and Kutcher have chemistry and personality points easily covered. The dialogue is okay, but not great, although there are a few laugh-out-loud moments. Some of those involve Jack and Joy's best friends, played by Rob Corddry and Lake Bell, respectively.

It's not shoddily done, but "What Happens in Vegas" doesn't exceed its predetermined design. The material is able to poke a little but it fails to muster take the opportunity to marry for granted, though.

And while the film quickly denies its overall formal love and unrelated grand angles, it's still a union of typical elements that doesn't upend out of control.



FEEDBACK

Sad, indeed

From Erik Mark-ong (erik_samson@yahoo.com) of Lipa City:

Heart Evangelista and rookie Senator romance is a sad story indeed. Relationships always ensure love— in that case, other Heart's career has been badly affected.

Penthouse fan

From kevin_r_reong@hotmail.com:

Thanks for your article about the Penthouse. I'm a senior student in Mindanao last April 16.

Mike Montemore was my batch mate at UP Diliman College of Engineering. I was surprised to learn from your story that he now works as a home care respiratory therapist in San Francisco. Please say hello to him for me. I'm based in San Diego, CA.

What's wrong?

From Kat Reyes Estrellita (gentlecloudkiss@yahoo.com) of Makati City:

I don't know if it's the judges' lack of chemistry, the spark-less host's lack of spontaneity or the audiences' choice mediocrity (maybe all of those), but Gerald Y's "Pinoy Idol" is becoming an absolute dud.

If 2005 Y fails to sustain viewers' interests, the latest reviews may suffer. Miss Manners's last — absolutely utter shortlived fans.

If it's any consolation, Miss Manners will forever be known as the (last and only "Philippine Idol" winner.)